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OF FUN  
AND GAMES

# GAMES

INTERNATIONAL

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## TRIVIA GAMES

The Good, The Bad and  
The Ridiculous

## UP THE POLL

Election games that get  
our vote

## DIPLOMACY

The Twilight world of  
Lima



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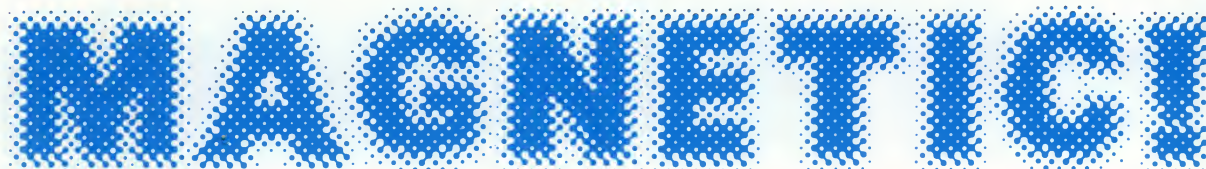


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**TOY SAFETY:** All materials including the magnetic rubber and inks comply to British & European Toy Safety Regulations.





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# UP FRONT

Hi,

I don't suppose you need me to tell you by now, but a new year is upon us. One of the many things that this brings is an outbreak of retromania amongst leader writers.

Be they dealing with music or metallurgy, nothing can stop them prattling on about their industry's achievements over the past year, spreading the contagious virus as they go. The only sure way to avoid this plague, *a doctor writes*, is to stop reading newspapers and magazines altogether. 'Don't leave home with one,' as it were. Unfortunately the good doctor's warnings were not heeded at GI HQ where an underling was spotted reading a copy of the *Sunday Times*, one of the main breeding grounds of retromania. Quick as a flasher, the once great journal was destroyed, but not before the mountains of retro supplements had cast their evil spell. Now read on.

## 1988 - YEAR OF THE LIVING DEAD

'I had sex with an alien' screamed a *Sunday Sport* headline, which unwittingly summed up the aesthetic of the times.

Junk is their new cultural currency. Be it food, *Neighbours*, or Wimbledon FC, rubbish is 'in'. Pretty soon it will be arriving in your living room from outer space, courtesy of satellite TV.

Of course it's easier to produce rubbish, nowhere more so than in the games business where it is now possible simply to sell a *title*. Don't worry about the game, that'll come later, Wicked Willie.

If it wasn't rubbish then it was reincarnation, with *Civilisation*, *Stratego*, *Masterpiece*, and *Poleconomy*, all being either revived or refitted. Were any of these games buried prematurely? Is there such a dearth of new ideas that corpses need to be exhumed? Or is it simply a lack of imagination coupled with a failure of nerve?

The appetite for trivia continued unabated, with yet more additions to the genre. As long as the public buys them, the games industry will produce them. And why not? They are in business to make cash, not to produce arcane esoterica.

The independent sector had a mixed year. The main problem was that they set their sights on families with a collective IQ of under 10, thinking that's where the money is. Unfortunately, this brings them into the arena of TV advertising and vast marketing budgets, against which they are not financially equipped to compete. Even if they were, their prospects are doubtful. All too often games are produced on the advice of well meaning friends and relatives who have little understanding of how tough the business is, or what constitutes a saleable product. Fortunes are spent and lost, lives are destroyed.

The best option for them would be to try to produce a good adult game, where the market is not so crowded, and sales of around 5 000 should be possible in the specialist market, plus there is always the chance of having a crack at the big bucks in Germany, where the market for these games is twenty times the size of ours.

Across the Atlantic a different story unfurled, though such comparisons are a trifle disingenuous. We get their hobby games, which are subjected to rigorous development and testing, rather than their mass market product. In this category Avalon Hill stole the show with *Enemy in Sight*, *Merchant of Venus*, and *Kremlin*. The big disappointment was the non-arrival of GDW's *Space 1889*, though we are told that this should be landing shortly. TSR made a big impact too with the excellent *Buck Rogers*, and the commercially successful *DragonLance*, while the less celebrated *Mertwig's Maze* was one of the bargains of the year.

The German market proved a law unto itself, with games that couldn't find a publisher in the UK selling like there was no tomorrow in the Fatherland. *Schoko & Co*, *Auf Achse*, and *McMulti*, all sophisticated quality products, chalked up huge sales, while Ravensburger's *Scotland Yard* hit the million mark. When I mentioned this to a leading UK games company recently, I was told that the British public was 'not interested' in quality.

They used to say the same about cars, in the days when we used to produce them, that is.

## REVIEW SECTION

### Star Ratings

\*\*\*\*\*

Top class game. Highly recommended

\*\*\*\*

Very good game. Worth buying.

\*\*\*

Worth a look

\*\*

Only if the subject interests you

\*

A true turkey

The Christmas period is nearly always bereft of new releases. Most companies release their new products earlier in the year and then give them the big push in the weeks immediately prior to the festive season. In other words, it's been a quiet month.

To some extent this has been compensated for by some excellent new games on the wargames front, capped by the splendid *West of Alamein*.

Joining the review crew this month is ex pop star and Arsenal supporter John Harrington. John is perhaps best known for his exploits as the editor of the long running fanzine *Take That You Fiend*, a role which makes him well qualified to author the series on fanzines ('The Twilight Zone' appears on page 26).

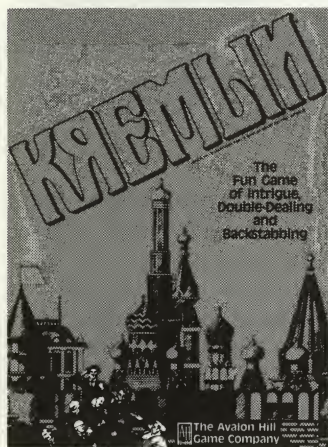
Also making a first appearance in these pages is Paz Newis, a rolegamer whose eagerness to 'get down and frup' is undiminished by time, place, or physical condition.



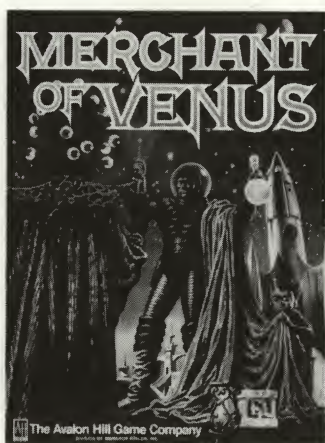


**Game Fanatics  
will look  
everywhere  
for  
Great Games!**

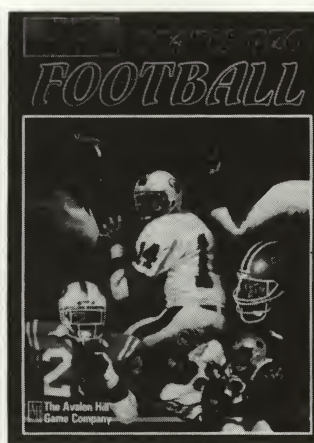
## NEWEST HITS



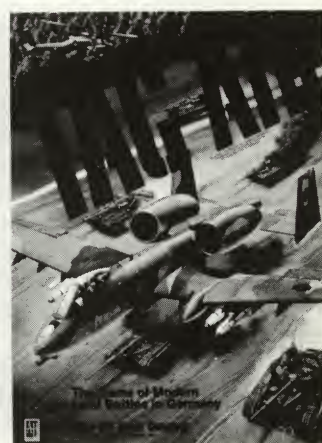
**Kremlin #878**  
\$20 Retail



**Merchant of Venus #876**  
\$25 Retail



**Statis Pro Football #9250**  
\$35 Retail



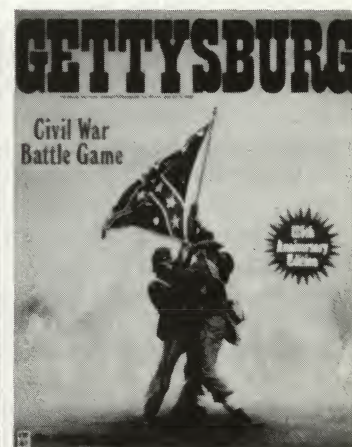
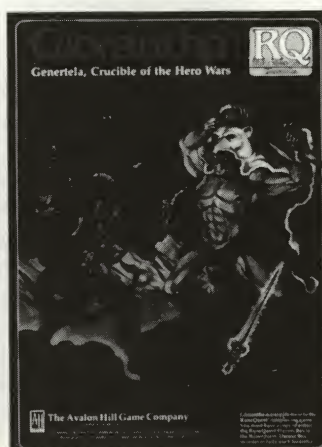
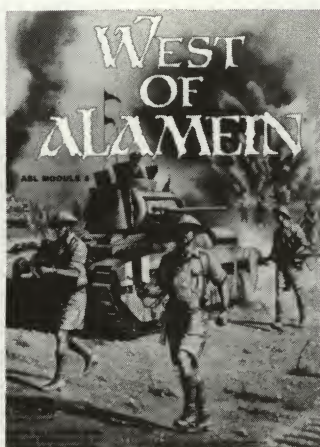
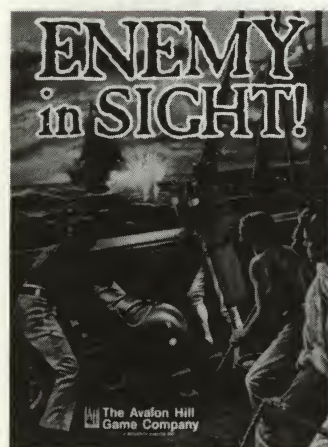
**Tac Air #872**  
\$26 Retail

**Enemy in Sight #877**  
\$12 Retail

**West of Alamein #8228**  
\$45 Retail

**Glorantha #8585**  
\$24 Retail

**Gettysburg #731**  
\$15 Retail



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# GENERAL GAMES

## POLECONOMY

DESIGNED BY  
BRUCE HATHERLEY

PUBLISHED BY  
SPEARS

PRICE £17.95

\*\*\*

Forgive me for stating the startlingly obvious, but **Poleconomy** is a game on the themes of politics and economics. The aim of the game is to make the most money, and this is done by buying up companies and charging players rent – oops, sorry, wrong game – charging players company profits when they land on your company squares. In addition to being an industrial magnate, players also seek power in government, the better to be able to manipulate the economy to their own fiscal advantage.

Despite the claims of Spears that this is a role-playing game (presumably players get to be the Heseltine or SuperMac character classes?), what we have here is a direct descendant of **Monopoly**. Players roll the dice, move their tokens, land on a company square and either buy the company ('I liked the square so much, I bought the company!') or pay copious amounts of money to someone who already owns it. There are innovations which make it a very different game to **Monopoly**, but **Poleconomy** – particularly the introductory version – is enough in the mould of the old family favourite to make it accessible to the average family.

The board layout is somewhat similar to Games Workshop's **Talisman**, in that it has three circuits. However, players' tokens only move round the outside two circuits. The innermost is used to

represent the tides of the economy. Only the 'FT Index marker' moves around the innermost circuit, and it sets the inflation rate (ranging from one up to six and back down to one again) and also triggers events, such as taxation, bond payouts or elections.

The two outer tracks consist mainly of company squares – mostly household names such as Kodak, Brooke Bond, Cadbury and the ever popular British Telecom – plus income squares and FT Index squares.

If you land on a company square and no one owns that company, you may buy it at a cost of £100 000 multiplied by the current inflation rate. Should another player subsequently land on that company square he would have to pay to the owner of the company profits of £100 000 multiplied by the current inflation rate. However, it is the Prime Minister who sets the direction of the FT Index marker – in other words, whether inflation should rise or fall – so it should now become clear why political power is important in this game. There are 14 income squares on the board and they fulfil a similar role to the 'Go' square in **Monopoly**. Unlike **Monopoly**, however, you do not have to pass them to collect money; instead you must land on them. Some income squares pay more than others.

The FT Index squares are an ingenious feature and to give the designer his due, they give this **Monopoly**-style game a new dimension. When a player lands on an FT Index square, he rolls a die and moves the FT Index marker that number of steps along the innermost track. This will usually alter the inflation rate. Sometimes it will take the inflation marker up past the peak (or trough, if the trend was downward) and the effect of this is to reverse the trend of inflation. Naturally the PM may intervene again and reverse the direction.

In a previous incarnation of **Poleconomy**, the FT Index squares had

numbers printed on them which were used instead of throwing the dice. So, if you landed on an FT Index square with a number four on it, you moved the FT Index marker four steps along the innermost circuit. I feel this was a better system. Under the old system, players could manoeuvre to try to land on an FT Index square that nudged the marker on to an advantageous square for them – perhaps a bond payout square.

Most commonly, players who were not members of the government would try to nudge the FT Index marker on to the election square, while the government members would frantically try to move the marker past it or away from it. In the new version you are at the whim of the dice.

To move around the two outer circuits you roll two dice and decide which direction to move your token. Moving to an 'Option Square' enables you to transfer between the middle and outside circuits. This is done simply by picking up your token and placing it on the option square of your choice. On your next turn, you may roll the dice and decide whether to move clockwise or anti-clockwise on the middle or outer circuit.

There is more to sitting on an option square than simply waiting for an opportunity to cross over to plunder the companies on the other circuit. While resting on an option square, you can also buy things. For instance, on the Barclay's Bank option square, a player may buy Treasury Bonds if they are available. They cost £100 000 and pay out £50 000 every time the FT Index marker lands on a 'bonds' square. An interest rate of 50% may seem wildly generous, but the previous version of the game stipulated a £100 000 pay-out! The Spears version has taken us somewhat closer to reality. Chancellor Nigel Lawson is doing his bit for the credibility of this game by bumping interest rates up towards 50% as fast as he can ...



The other option squares consist of advertising, life assurance, business insurance and a nifty square occupied by merchant bankers Morgan Grenfell who, for a fee, will mastermind a takeover bid on another player's company. The take-over square comes into its own more later in the game when most of the companies have been bought up. The other option squares generally get visited early in the proceedings, because they really do offer money for old rope.

Unfortunately for the players who get to the good option squares last, there is only a limited supply of goodies such as life insurance policies (cost £100 000 and worth £1 000 000 at the end of the game – and there's only five of them). While it is a good idea to make these valuable commodities rare, it does seem to penalise unduly those players who go last or nearly last.

The electoral system used in the advanced game is disappointing. Players simply roll dice, with doubles rolling again and adding on. The total rolled constitutes each player's votes in Parliament. In the basic and advanced games players may form coalitions in order to achieve a majority, with the largest partner automatically becoming Prime Minister while the other coalition members are assigned nominal salary earning posts such as Chancellor of the Exchequer (hence Spears's strange assertion that this is a 'role-playing game').

As well as deciding each turn on the trend of inflation, the PM agrees a

package of tax measures with members of his government. Usually these entail damaging non-government members while lining the pockets of cabinet ministers. However, the government has to be careful because in the advanced game, government salaries and subsidies come out of the treasury, not the bank, and should the treasury go bankrupt, *everybody loses!*

The treasury relies on taxation proceeds to keep it afloat, but taxation need only be paid out of players' cash on hand; make the taxes too punitive and players will simply contrive not to have any cash. Either they will not buy any companies and therefore make no profits (because there is no incentive to) or they will reinvest cash as quickly as possible to stop the treasury getting its hands on it.

The treasury can usually stave off bankruptcy in an emergency by issuing treasury bonds to Barclay's Bank. However, once the bonds have been issued, players may then go to the Barclay's option square and buy them – with a 50% interest rate, you can believe there will be a stampede to buy them. And where does the money come from to meet the interest payments on the bonds? Why, from the treasury of course, and if there is no money there to pay the bondholders then, you guessed it, the treasury has to issue more bonds. When the money runs out and the bonds run out, the game runs out.

It should be evident therefore that a viable strategy for any player getting frozen out by the government is to buy as many bonds as he can lay his hands

### VIRGIN GAMES CENTRE'S BEST-SELLERS FOR DECEMBER 1988

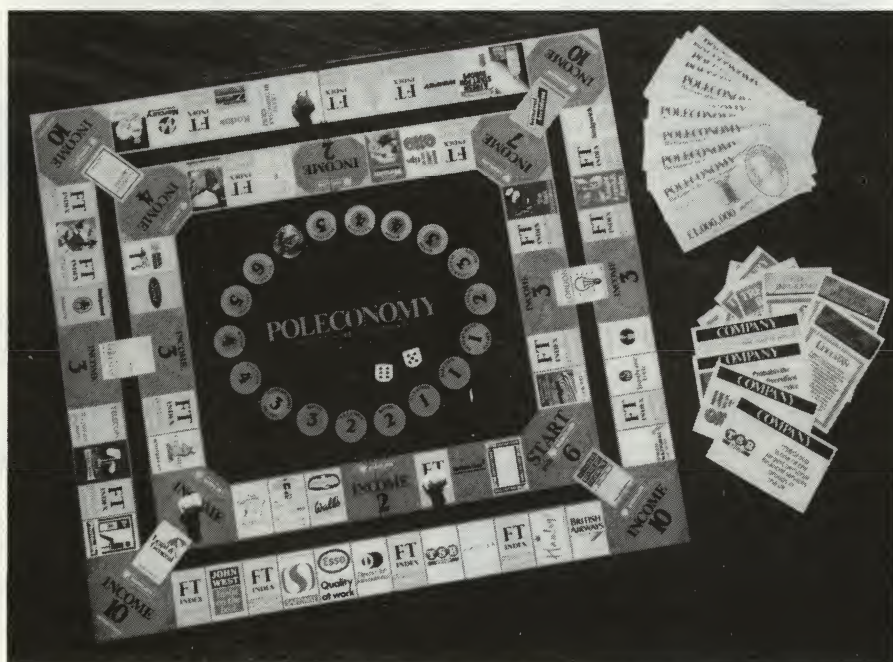
- 1 **Trivial Pursuit** (Kenner Parker)
- 2 **Pass Out** (Paul Lamond)
- 3 **Wicked Willie** (Paul Lamond)
- 4 **Therapy** (Milton Bradley)
- 5 **Scruples** (Milton Bradley)
- 6 **Quotations** (Milton Bradley)
- 7 **Scrabble** (Spears)
- 8 **Monopoly** (Waddingtons)
- 9 **Rubik's Clock** (Matchbox)
- 10 **Complete Bastard** (Paul Lamond)

on and scupper the economy. The government can, if it has the cash, buy back its bonds but it does so at 50% over the face value (ie £150 000). As money is always too tight to mention for the treasury, buying back bonds is not usually a feasible option.

The enjoyment level of **Poleconomy** is hugely dependent on how well the government manages the economy. The natural inclination of competitive games players is to freeze out other players, but in **Poleconomy** it is better for all concerned if the players in power try to engineer a buoyant economy where all make money. All other things being equal, the income from government salaries should tip the balance in favour of the player who remains Prime Minister the longest.

With this proviso (that the game has to be played openly), I can give the advanced version of **Poleconomy** a recommendation, if only on the grounds that trying to stop the country going down the toilet is an illuminating experience. The introductory and basic versions of the game would hold little appeal for hardened gamers, but they fit the bill for the family market.

John Harrington





THE **G.I. MOE** REVIEW-TEAM

G.I. Moe, Tina Turtle, Doc Strangedrake, Sara Faucet, Tad Pole and The Bag-Man™



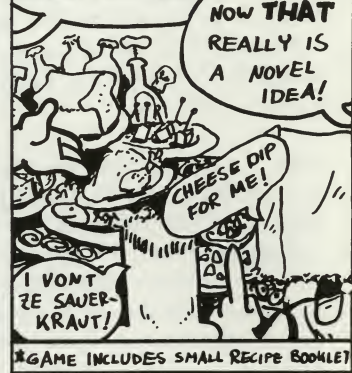
ORGY IS QUITE A SIMPLE GAME: ROLL THE DIE, MOVE YOUR PIECE (A GOBLET) AND FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS ON THE SQUARE LANDED UPON.



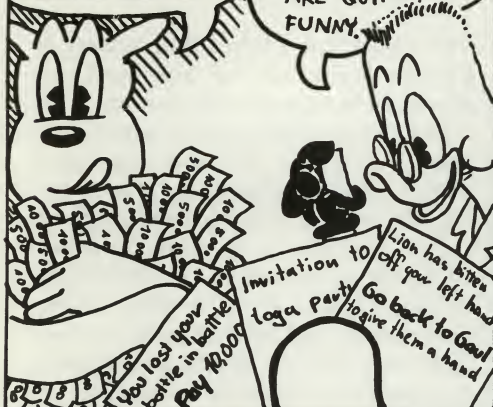
DURING THE GAME YOU GET THE CHANCE  
TO BUY VILLAS, SLAVES AND CHARIOTS.  
ANYBODY LANDING ON YOUR VILLA HAS TO  
GIVE YOU A "HOSPITALITY GIFT" (=MONEY)



THE HOST SHOULD PROVIDE FOOD AND DRINKS,\* AS CERTAIN SQUARES ORDER YOU TO EAT A TIDBIT OR DRINK A POTION.

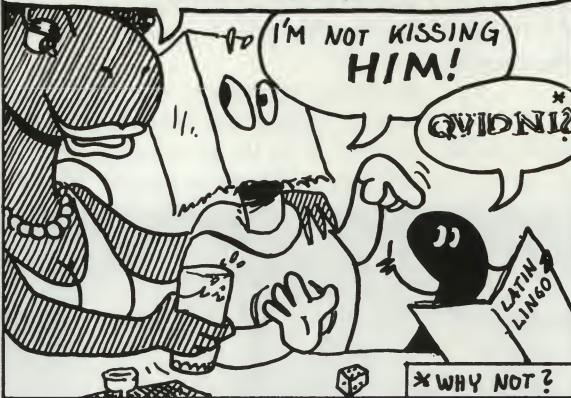


THE OBJECT IS TO GAIN  
SUFFICIENT WEALTH TO  
BECOME CONSUL.

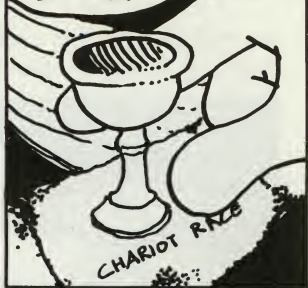


SOME OF THE  
EVENT CARDS  
ARE QUITE  
FUNNY

**!ATER:** YOU LANDED ON AN ORGY-SQUARE.  
SO YOU MUST NOW DRINK THIS AND KISS THE  
PERSONS SITTING ON EITHER SIDE OF YOU.



I LANDED ON THE CHARIOT RACE! THE RACING RULES ARE HIGHLY COMPLEX AND REALISTIC: EACH CHARIOT OWNER THROWS ONE DIE, HIGHEST THROW WINS THE RACE.



SIDE BETS AND ANY KIND OF  
BARTERING/BRIBING ARE ALLOWED!



AND IF YOU GET BORED WITH THE GAME, YOU CAN ALWAYS INVENT YOUR OWN **ADVANCED** RULES!



WELL, ORGY IS OBVIOUSLY NOT A GAME FOR THE "SERIOUS" GAMER. BUT STILL... THE GAME CAN BE GOOD FUN. PLAY VALUE DEPENDS VERY MUCH ON WHO YOU PLAY WITH (AND WHERE YOU SIT)! IT IS A BIT EXPENSIVE THOUGH.

## ORGY

DESIGNED BY  
JULIE PRIOR  
PUBLISHED BY  
COMISSATIO, LTD.

f 24.95

REK88



## FAMILY BUSINESS

DESIGNED BY  
MAYFAIR GAMES  
(in house)

PUBLISHED BY  
SPIELFREAKS LTD

PRICE £9.95

\*\*\*\*\*

Despite our editorial grumbling about old games being rehashed, this re-release is more than welcome, not least because it has been unavailable for several years, and was very difficult to obtain in the UK when it was first published by the Illinois based Mayfair Games back in 1984. Another reason to welcome its return is that it is a very good game, though it could lose you a few friends, for the object of the game is to eliminate your opponents.

At the outset each player receives a 'family' of the sort you probably wouldn't invite round to dinner ('Cup of tea, Mr Capone?'). The family is represented by nine cards which are laid

out in front of you. You also receive five 'action' cards which allow you to do the most awful things to your opponents' families, the most common of which is to place a contract on them. To do this you take a member of your opponent's family and place it in the middle of the table alongside the hit list card, in sequence if there are already some of your fellow gangsters *in situ*. Once there are six cards or more against the wall then a 'Mob War' breaks out, which means that on every subsequent turn the first mobster waves the long goodbye and is placed under the 'rest in peace' card. This bloodbath continues until the wall is temporarily mob free. Play then continues until there are six more unfortunates whereupon it's mob war time again.

The aim of the game is to be the last player with a family: any kind of family,



for when you lose the last of your kinfolk, you are out of the game.

The rest of the action cards allow you to do a variety of things like rescue your boys from the hit list, or double the death rate each turn by playing an ambush card which also starts a mob war. The most fun is to be had with the 'St Valentine's Day Massacre' card which immediately spells curtains for all the boys currently on the hit list.

**Family Business** takes about thirty minutes to conclude, and can incorporate up to six families. As for the skill factor, it is more a question of 'Are you feeling lucky, punk?' But don't worry about that. Go ahead, make your day. Buy this game.

Brian Walker

## MR TRUCKER

DESIGNED BY  
GARRY F WHITE

PUBLISHED BY  
MARKETING  
INTERNATIONAL

PRICE £15 (approx)

\*

I wanted so much to like this game. Firstly because trucking games have almost as much appeal as railroad games. I mean, trucks are just another form of transportation after all. But also because it was apparent from my phone conversation with Garry F White of Marketing International that a lot of

time and effort had gone into the creation, production and marketing of the game. So it is with great regret that I must give it the thumbs down.

The gameboard is quite attractive. It contains a network of two lane roadways divided into spaces set against a background of a map of Canada and the United States. The cities and roads aren't realistically placed, of course. Indeed, half the road spaces are in the ocean. The plastic truck pieces are tiny, but necessarily so to fit in the small road spaces. The money and cards are good quality game components. The box is a little flimsy and the cover is much too busy.

The rulebook reflects the tender loving care that Mr White and his co-creators put into the game. The 'Forward' begins 'Mr Trucker is a comprehensive, educational board game based on transport trucking.' To prove this, the rulebook is 16 pages long, while the

actual rules for the game take up about one page. Every section contains descriptions of actual trucking regulations and practices. So, maybe the game is fairly comprehensive and educational. Unfortunately, and here I have no doubts, it is not much of a game.

Up to eight can play. Players begin the game at the Home Terminal in the centre of the board. Each player then picks a destination card to find out which one of the four cities he must deliver his goods to: Tampa, Los Angeles, St Johns or Vancouver. After reaching this city, a player receives payment for the load and draws another destination card for his next route. After three routes have been completed, players pay any penalties, interest on loads taken out, and their monthly rent on the truck. The player with the most money left wins.

Movement is controlled by dice roll. Certain road spaces force a player to



draw a reward/penalty card, to pay for lodging or meals, to pay to repair a low bridge his truck has hit, etc. There are a few other extras such as weigh stations, dangerous cargoes and border crossings, but all these are controlled by the dice and cards as well. The last pages of the rulebook are dedicated to a section called 'Driving Rules'. Most of this section describes at length how one truck can pass another (by moving into the other lane), when one or two sentences would surely have sufficed. The 'Adult Version' section of the rules allows players to draw six destination cards and choose one of the six as their next route.

As you've probably gathered by now, there is almost no strategy involved. Because I'm a game designer, people are always telling me, 'I have a great idea for a game,' or 'I'm designing a game on...' Usually, the game is about their

particular profession, as they think nobody could ever have thought of doing a game on that before. I guess this is just one of those things game designers have to live with. Everybody in the world thinks they can do our job. I always wonder what these people say to their doctors and lawyers.

I cringe when I read rules like, 'Each player must roll doubles on the dice in order to move from the Home Terminal.' Rules like this existed in the stone age of games. Yet **Mr Trucker** is typical of so many other games. It is designed by people with the best intentions, but who know nothing about game design. They have probably played **Monopoly** and a few other basic games, and that is all. But they feel sure they can make a better game. Wrong.

Like any profession, game design involves unique skills. And like every

profession, experience is key. What kind of experience? Well, how about spending part of every day of your life thinking about, studying, playing, and designing games. No exaggeration. Not a day goes by that I don't spend some time working on games, even if only thinking about them. TV cops have been heard to say, 'It's not my job, it's what I am.' Well, I'm a gamer.

I got several promotional items with the game. On one flyer, people from organisations like Goodyear, the Canadian Trucking Association, and Esso Corporation (their logos all appear on the box cover too) endorse **Mr Trucker**. The blind leading the blind. Take it from me, this is a turkey.

*Alan R Moon*

## BEWITCHED

DESIGNED BY  
**MICHAEL KINDRED &  
MALCOLM GOLDSMITH**

PUBLISHED BY  
**WADDINGTONS**

PRICE £12.95

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En route to attempting to become a prince you may move up to two of your three frogs around the board via die rolls, though you can use one of the rolls to move the 'stubborn' cat. Have you ever known any other kind of cat? Watch out for the deadly snakes too. Unlike real snakes, these have a magnet attached to their underside, and should your mobile frog have the misfortune to trigger this, then he is 'removed' from the game (as the rulebook delicately puts it) unless you have an antidote card. When you arrive at a witch's hat, you may have a peep at a spell book, and choose to pick it up and attach it to your

frog, either to get it home, or to confuse your fellow frogs.

So, there is ample room for bluffing. Memory also plays a part, for you may swap books, and half inch them from other frogs too. It's a pity the graphics are so weak, for **Bewitched** is both a fine game and a welcome alternative to the plethora of violent toys which seem to appear every Christmas. 2-4 players should take an average of about 45 minutes to play.

*Brian Walker*

For those of you with young children whom you would like to introduce to the pleasures of boardgaming without being bored comatose yourself, this is an excellent place to start. The theme is quite similar to **Elixir (3 Wishes)**, though it lacks that game's graphical impact. This is somewhat compensated for by the numerous stand up figures provided, which include 12 frogs, 8 cats, and 12 snakes.

The object of the game is to be the first player to find the spell book which will turn his frog into a prince, and return home safely with it. At the start of the game the four spell books are placed on the appropriate spaces under the witches' hats. Only one of these contains the magic spell. Pick up one of the others and you remain a frog.





## INSIDER DEALING

DESIGNED BY  
**PETER O'MAHONEY &  
MICHELLE CAFFREY**

PUBLISHED BY  
**FANTASY GAMES**

PRICE **£27.95**

\* 1/2

The stock market has always been a fertile field to plough when it comes to games, no more so than in the age of bangs, both big and small. **Stockmarket** (Jordans Games), and **Black Monday** (Hexagames), have been two recent

additions to the process of demystifying the machinations of the City.

The latest effort, **Insider Dealing**, reflects the less salubrious side of the era of 'popular capitalism', as *She Who Must Be Obeyed* likes to describe it. Unfortunately, a simulation game this ain't, unless, that is, you regard playing the market as pure luck.

What we have here is roll a die, and buy or sell what you land on. The share price changes when you land on the Market Information square and draw a card from the top of the deck. The information is read off and the price adjusted accordingly. Or, if you land on the Inside Information square then you may keep the card to play at a later stage. As you may have gathered by now, this is really the stock market reduced to *Snakes and Ladders*.

The problem is that there are hardly any decisions, based on knowledge, to make

throughout the entire game. Even the ending is reduced to something of a race; the winner is the first player to pass the start square with £1m in cash.

The consequence of this is that there is little incentive to play again, as there is no way that you can get better at the game (unless you want to practice die rolling). Surely anybody interested in stock market games would expect at least a modicum of strategy? Conversely, if you are looking for a fun game would the stock market be your first choice of subject matter?

The components are good quality and even include a calculator. But surely the cost of such an accessory would have been better spent on employing somebody capable of providing the game with a system other than rolling the die and hoping for the best?

*Brian Walker*

## SCHOKO & CO

DESIGNED BY  
**Y HIRSCHFIELD &  
G MONNET**

PUBLISHED BY  
**SCHMIDT SPIELE**

PRICE **£20** (subject to  
exchange rates)

\*\*\*\*\*

Yes, yes, I know. But better late than never. Following Alan Moon's strategy article on this game in our first issue, we have been inundated with requests for a review. So here goes. 'Schoko' is one of the few games that I know to address the problems of chocolate production. Specifically, the tricky task of turning cocoa into *After Eight*, or whatever.

The game is played in turns consisting of seven phases. Each turn represents a month in the life of your chocolate factory. The object is to deploy your workforce with maximum efficiency, in order to produce chocolate and sell it for maximum gain.

To do this you hire and fire employees, and pay salaries (phase 1); determine the amount of cocoa to be placed on the market then bid for it (phase 2); convert the cocoa into chocolate (phase 3); sell the chocolate by bidding for contracts (phase 4); process contracts (phase 5); turn over the event card and act accordingly (phase 6). You may sneak a look at the card by paying \$15 000, in what we might best describe as phase zero at the start of each month. Finally, pay back loans, interest payments, buy shares (phase 7).

Each type of employee you hire performs specific tasks: one factory worker converts three bars of cocoa into chocolate; one salesperson attends four sales meetings; one secretary may process one contract; one bookkeeper may process two contracts.

The playing board depicts five cities in which the cocoa bars are deployed. Each player has a say in determining the number of bars on offer. Your decision will rest on your storage capacity (max 16) and your workforce. Obviously, there is little point in declaring the maximum if you have fewer factory workers than your opponents. Once all the bars have been placed, the bidding starts. Commencing with New York, players write down (in secret) the number of bars they want and how much they are prepared to pay. Ties are

## NEXT ISSUE

All the variants you've never wanted – **1830, Titan, TV Wars**, plus a new scenario for **Test of Arms**.

In review: **Wicketz, The Golf Game, Tough Luck, Test of Arms, Sky Galleons of Mars, Space: 1889**, plus many more.

All the new releases for '89 previewed in our report from the Earl's Court Toy Fair.

**A F.I.S.Tful of Pesetas:** what are Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson playing at in Spain? Is the extradition treaty still working? Our investigative team visits Rancho Notorious to bring you the facts.



resolved in favour of the turn leader. When this phase has been completed, players convert their cocoa into chocolate – three bars per worker.

Phase 4 is probably the most crucial for it is here that the all-important profits are made. The number of sales meetings to be held is determined by the largest salesforce. If the maximum number of salespeople hired by one player is two, then there will be 8 sales meetings (4 per salesperson). The player(s) with two salespeople will attend them all, players with only one will have to decide which to attend once the contract has been revealed.

The contract cards refer to the number of bars required and give both a high price and a low price. Bidding starts at the low price and continues up until a player states he will take the contract at the announced price. The player then

gives the stated number of bars to the bank and receives cash equal to his bid. This he wraps around the contract card and places it next to his secretaries' 'office'. Once all the meetings have been completed the contracts may be processed according to the number of office staff hired. After the event card has been exposed players may take out loans, and invest surplus cash in the form of unit trusts.

Because of the advantage in being the turn leader, it is important that the number of months should be divisible by the number of players. An eight month game should take around two hours with four players.

Like most games with such interrelated phases, there is virtually no luck involved. The result hangs on your decisions. Despite this the game is easy to learn and simple to play, and should

be considered an essential purchase for lovers of economic and trading games.

The components are adequate, if nothing special, though the stand up cardboard 'factories' are a nice touch. The translated rules present no problems and are clearly laid out.

**Schoko**, contrary to what many people think, is of *French* origin, where it is known as **Ambition**. The production is exactly the same as the German game described here, though the box is different. Copies of the game should now be in stock at Just Games in London. Failing that, take a lager lout day excursion to Calais. It's worth it.

*Brian Walker*

(For more information about the game see Alan Moon's excellent article in issue #1).

## SLICK!

DESIGNED BY  
DAVID WATTS

PUBLISHED BY  
ROSTHERNE GAMES

PRICE £6.95



Anyone who has played **Railway Rivals** will know that David Watts is capable of designing excellent games. Since that fine game appeared, David has been trying to produce another just as good and **Slick!** is his latest release from Rostherne Games. The game's theme is the refining and marketing of oil in the UK and the players aim to make the most money by buying shares in and controlling the seven fictional oil companies.

**Slick!** comes in a cardboard tube and the components consist of a plastic coated map, a single rule sheet, counters, event cards, game money, share certificates and accounting sheets. The standard of the parts can only charitably be described as basic. The map isn't bad but most of the parts are hand drawn and coloured and it

really only reaches the standard of school teaching kits. Only the rules are well printed on two sides of A4. What we have here is a game made to a price, a very reasonable price indeed, but I can't see how Rostherne expect to compete with the professionals on presentation.

If **Slick!** doesn't compare on looks, then it has to be an extraordinarily good game to make it a success. Sadly, it doesn't cut it here either. The short rules are quite clear and explain the game system, which is roughly as follows: players move their counters around the board buying and selling shares as they land on the relevant company markers. When a player holds two shares in a company he becomes a director and when he owns a controlling interest he becomes the Managing Director. Directors receive a fee and decide what the dividend paid to shareholders is. Once the companies have built refineries and are under way refining oil, the rest of the game revolves around delivering the refined oil to marketing areas on the map. Event cards throw in a few curveballs but that is basically it. The player with the most money at game end wins.

The game involves each player in running one or more companies and the parallels with 1829 and 1830 are obvious. There are elements of these games in the share buying, company control and dividend payments, but it

feels as though the rules have been bolted on to the basic game system almost as an afterthought. The game, unlike its railway cousins, requires a lot of record keeping on the sheets supplied to keep track of oil sales, income and expenditure. I am no fan of bookkeeping during games and this is one of the worst I've come across, but that is a personal quibble. The game simply drifts along; the players felt as if they were going through the motions and what play decisions the game has are limited. There is no spark to make the game exciting and little encouragement in taking risks. Even doing nothing seems to be a reasonable option.

It is the most difficult thing to remain objective when reviewing a game designed by as nice a man as David Watts, but I fear, **Railway Rivals** aside, he is still looking for that next winner. Given the way **Slick!** looks and plays one has to ask where Rostherne's target audience is. Certainly it isn't going to sell on the shelves as a professional game, so it must be reduced to specialist sales to committed game players or the education area, where it would be ideal. If this is where **Slick!** is aimed then the game is acceptably packaged and priced, but this does not explain the uninspiring game system. If anything more commercial is sought then **Slick!** needs a lot of work.

*Mike Siggins*



# UP THE POLL

*American presidential candidate*

**Alan R Moon** (*the Asylum*

*Party*) takes a look at a selection of election games.



There are several topics which gamers seem to find irresistibly appealing. Mention a game on one of these themes, and any real gamer has simply got to have a copy. Railroads stand out as the topic at the top of the heap, followed closely by the stock market, auto racing, horse racing, spies and gangsters, westerns, *aaaaand* elections.

For those of you who doubt the enjoyment of election games, please pay no attention to real life. Obviously, the recently concluded US presidential campaign was ridiculous, but election games usually are not. Besides, you don't have to play them every day for four years to get a winner.

## MR PRESIDENT

3M, 1967  
Out of print

**Components:** 54 blue ballot cards (27 president, 27 vice president), 54 red ballot cards, 26 candidate cards (13 blue, 13 red), 28 campaign headquarters cards, 2 tally boards, ballot box & cover, 2 dice, marking pencil, rules.

Avalon Hill bought the 3M line of games in 1977 and reprinted some of the titles including *Twixt*, *Acquire* and *Facts in Five*. Amazingly, they didn't reprint *Mr President*, which, after *Acquire*, was probably the best game in the line, though AH did put their name on the

boxes. Copies are sometimes still available at auctions and from dealers of out of print games, but they are getting harder to find and more expensive each year. This is too bad because *Mr President* is a game every real gamer should have as part of his collection.

The game divides the states into four regions: Eastern, Southern, Midwestern and Western. Ballot cards each show one state from each region and the number of votes for each of the four states. The larger states like New York and California have 5-20 votes, while the smaller states like Hawaii and Wyoming have 1-3.

Within each region, each state has a die number 2-12. Each turn, the player announces which region he will campaign in and then rolls the dice. He can then campaign in the two or three states corresponding to the individual dice and the total dice roll. For example, if the player picks the Eastern Region and rolls a 4 and a 3, he could campaign in Massachusetts (3), New Jersey (4), and Maine (7). The states with the most electoral votes are all numbered 4-6, making them the easiest to get to most of the time. A player may play any and all ballot cards which list any of the states rolled. Because each card gives the player four choices, every play is an important decision.

If a player rolls a 7, 11, or doubles, he can perform special actions instead of campaigning like fund raising, advertising and debating. Players can also visit the home states of their

candidates, (for which there are special ballot cards) either by choice or by blundering when rolling states for which they have no ballot cards to play in their hand.

In the later stages of the game, players can choose two regions instead of one each turn. The campaigning ends when one player gets rid of all his cards. Players then cast absentee ballots and finally add up their totals.

The game opens itself up to lots of changes and alterations. For instance, players could easily create the actual candidates for any modern American presidential election. The *Built In Edge* chart on the tally board and the *Incumbent Year Built In Edge* chart (on the inside of the box) are both outdated, but players who want to could use the results of the last five or six elections to make up more contemporary ones.

If the game has a fault, it lies in the luck of the campaign headquarters cards. The worst cards are those which force a player to lose a turn. These should always be removed from the game. Losing a turn, especially late in the game, is just too much of a disadvantage. The rumour cards are also bad, but more of a pain than anything else. The bulletin cards and press release cards are good but not overwhelmingly. The real killers are the press endorsement cards which are simply too powerful. To take out a lot of the luck, I recommend either playing without the cards altogether, or playing with only the bulletin and press release cards, reshuffling them as necessary.



Another change which helps the game concerns the candidate cards. The rules instruct the players to shuffle their deck and take two at random as their candidates. This can produce a lop-sided game and again emphasises luck over skill. Better is for both players simply to select the two candidates (the best two, obviously) from the thirteen. Better still is for both players to use the worst two candidates: Bryant and Lambert for the Democrats and Warren and Reinhardt for the Republicans, Bryant and Warren being the presidential candidates. Using these candidates improves the game in several ways. One, it slows the game down some because each player can only hold six cards. This would seem to reduce the players' options, but in fact having fewer cards makes the campaigning decisions tougher and more interesting. Players will roll more sevens and elevens allowing them to advertise, raise funds, or debate more, and will also blunder more often. Two, it gives the players less money to spend on advertising and less skill when they do, which may make it necessary for them to do some fund raising, a strategy otherwise seldom employed. Three, all four candidates have good home states and otherwise poor abilities so the players start as evenly as possible.

The multi-player version of this game is often overlooked, but the game is as much fun with four as two. Just don't allow communication between the candidates of the same party. I know this is unrealistic, but it makes the game more fun.

I could write a whole article on strategy for **Mr President**, and believe me, with

the rules changes I've outlined, there is a minimum of luck involved and a premium on strategy. You win or lose by the decisions you make, not the rolls of the dice. It's a great game to play repeatedly with the same opponent too, because players (myself included) tend to become fixated on certain states and regions, and play their cards within this tunnel of vision. This, of course, creates an element of psychology in the game as one player tries to outguess the other, relying on their opponent's tendencies realised from earlier games.

One titbit of wisdom I can offer here. Don't underestimate the value of casting ballots in the small states. You may wind up winning more than just the three or four votes from these states. Casting ballots in as many states as possible during the regular campaigning is vital, because if you cast ballots in more states than your opponent, you receive extra cards to use as absentee ballots. And every extra card you get to cast as an absentee ballot gives you that much more flexibility and power during the endgame.

## CAMPAIGN TRAIL

GDW, 1983  
Recently deleted.

*Components: Map of the United States, 6 sets of 3 playing pieces, 48 campaign cards, a pad of tally sheets, 3 dice, rules.*

This game has officially gone out of print recently, but many stores still carry copies. In addition, GDW has even been sending out free copies on request, which I assume they will continue to do until their stock is exhausted.

This is a simple game. Players campaign by moving their tokens (representing their candidates) around the board. Each time one of their candidates ends its move, the player gets one, two or three votes, depending on the size of the city. Players announce the votes they receive but record them secretly on their tally sheets. The game ends after a certain time limit and then everyone counts up. There's a little more to it than that, but not much.

Like **Mr President**, the campaign cards add too much luck. Players should either remove the campaign cards, or just remove all the crisis and political ally cards.

I find this game a little boring and long to keep my interest. The rulebook suggests the game length be half an hour times the number of players, or two hours with four players. This allows the players to cover the whole country and make all campaigning strategies viable. But two hours of nothing but rolling dice, moving tokens, and recording numbers is just not enough of a game for me. Still, as simple as the game system is, it is a clever way of dealing with the subject. One of the joys of the game is the way it emphasises stubbornness and revenge. When one player thinks a state is rightfully his, he'll usually go to any lengths to keep it. For this reason, my Baltimore friends (Bruce Shelley, Mick Uhl, Bill Cleary, Cliff Willis, Bill Bukowski and Vinny the Ninny) who love this game and still play it regularly, call it 'The Trail of Slime'.

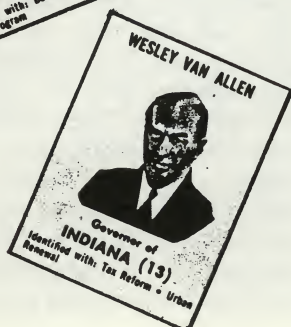
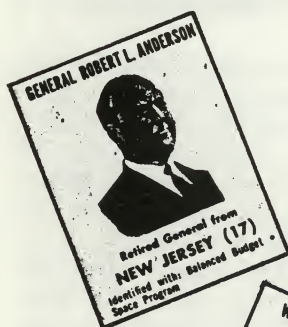
This same Baltimore gang have also come up with the following, even simpler and much quicker variant. Give each player 500 votes. All players then have 10-14 minutes to cast their 500 votes secretly on their tally sheets in any manner desired. After the votes have been cast, the usual endgame is followed (*our 'Fear and Loathing' variant for this game will appear in the next issue - Ed.*).

## WHO CAN BEAT NIXON?

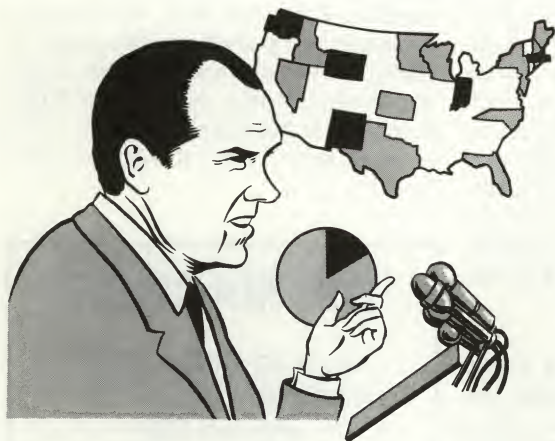
Harrison-Blaine of NJ  
(part of the Dynamic Games Series), 1970  
Out of print

*Components: gameboard, 8 tokens, 32 state cards, 24 event cards, 24 media cards, a pack of media points, a pack of money, 2 dice, rules.*

This game is not really in demand but it is hard to find if you are looking for a copy. Other games in the Dynamic Series include **Airport**, **Emperor of China**, **Lie Cheat and Steal**, **Wine Cellar**, **The Cities Game**, **Outlaw Trail**,







Would you buy a used game from this man?

**Go, I Ching, Woman & Man, Blacks and Whites, Diet, Body Talk, Drug Attack, Chug-a-Lug, ESP, IQ, Think Twice, The Feel Wheel and Society Today.**

At the start of the game the players decide who will play Nixon and who will play the challengers. There can be up to seven challengers in all and players can choose to be historical candidates or hypothetical ones. It makes no difference as there are no specific candidate abilities.

The board has a track around the outside with 40 spaces. Eight of the nine spaces on each of the four sides represent one or more states, the four sides representing the north, south, east and west regions. Players move around the board by rolling dice, with Nixon always going first. If a player lands on a state space, he can buy the state if he has enough money and media points. If a player lands on a state belonging to another player, he has to pay the owner. Sound familiar? Corner spaces and the middle space of each side allow players to perform special actions or draw cards. Cards are usually either good for Nixon and bad for the challengers, or vice versa.

After Nixon has circled the board twice, primaries occur when the primary even cards are drawn. The challenger drawing the card must have a political duel with the nearest challenger behind him on the board. Both players roll the dice, the player with the most electoral votes receiving a +2 advantage. The loser is eliminated and his electoral votes are contested by the remaining players through dice rolls. Nixon never takes part in the primaries and so is never knocked out of the game. The

winner is the first player to gain 270 electoral votes. There's little strategy involved and the components are adequate if nothing special, but despite this, the game has some charm. I guess there's just something about Nixon which brings out strong feelings in people. I don't think I'd care as much about a game called *Who Can Beat Bush?* (at least not yet).

## LANDSLIDE

Parker Brothers, 1971  
Out of print

**Components:** *gameboard, 20 politics cards, 35 votes cards, 51 state cards (including Washington DC), 4 tokens, 1 die, 2 card trays, rules on inner box lid.*

This game is for four players, although my copy mysteriously has five tokens. Like *Who Can Beat Nixon?* it is not much in demand, but hard to find despite what must have been a large print run from Parker Brothers.

The game play is also similar to *Who Can Beat Nixon?* The board has a circular track and players roll a die to move. When a player lands on a generic state space, he draws a card from the regional deck of the matching colour: east, south, mid-west and west. The player alone may look at the card and then it is put up for bid, with the highest bidder winning the card. Other spaces allow players to draw a politics card (a chance card), put an opponent's state up for auction, put one card from each region up for auction simultaneously, and so on.

The winner is the player with the most electoral votes after the last state is acquired.

Pretty basic stuff here. You could probably find other earlier (and later) games from Parker Brothers with exactly the same play mechanics.

## PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

Banovac Corporation,  
1038 Redwood Hwy, Mill  
Valley CA 94741, 1979

**Components:** *gameboard, 12 election cards, 32 delegate cards, 20 power cards, 36 campaign cards, 6 tokens, 2 dice, one page of rules.*

I was surprised to find this game in a store in New Jersey recently. It was the only copy on the shelf. I'd never heard of it before. I don't know if it's still available or not, but I doubt it. You really don't want a copy anyway.

I'm not going to give you much of a description of this game, because it is nothing but a piece of junk. Players roll the dice and move, pick up cards, and wage contests with their opponents for cards by dice rolls. The *Monopoly* influence is revealed through the rules which allow taking another turn after rolling doubles and the trading of cards. If I wasn't a collector, I'd burn it.

## ELECTION

Intellect, 1972  
Out of print

**Components:** *gameboard, 49 campaign cards, 6 popularity index markers, 108 electoral vote tokens (18 in each of the 6 colours), 30 hollow promise tokens (5 per colour), 42 floating vote tokens, 25 absentee vote tokens, 6 party leader pieces, rules.*

Like all the other Intellect games, it is almost impossible to find a copy of this game.

Brian Walker sent me a photocopy of the feature length review of *Election* which had appeared in *Games & Puzzles* 45. If you haven't read this review, you'll enjoy it (whether you have the game or not). After I read it, I had to have a copy of the game. Unfortunately, when I finally did get a copy, it didn't live up to the review. There are lots of good ideas



here, but they just don't hang together quite right.

Three to six can play. The basic play of the game has players moving about the board to campaign in the ten regions. During his turn a player can always play one campaign card and do one of the following:

- Lay two vote tokens in one or two adjacent areas
- Lay one vote token, and play a second campaign card
- Lay no vote tokens and pick up two floating vote tokens
- Lay no vote tokens, draw one campaign card and pick up one floating vote token
- Lay no vote tokens, pick up one floating vote token and play a second campaign card
- Lay no vote tokens and draw two campaign cards
- Lay no vote tokens, draw a campaign card and play a second campaign card

Most campaign cards force an opponent to pick up one or two vote tokens from the board. After the regular campaigning has ended, a special sequence begins wherein players pick up and play their floating vote tokens.

What makes this interesting is that each player's party has a different make-up of support. While one party might have a lot of blue collar workers, others have a lot of industrial workers or housewives. In addition, each region also has its own peculiar mix of voters. The skill is in using your party's support to your best advantage. The way the votes are totalled also has a twist. The more players who contest a region, the more the votes are spread out. For instance, if a player is the only one to campaign in Anglia, he receives 34 votes. If two people campaign, the winner gets 23 and the runner up 11. If three people campaign, the winner gets 19, the runner up 10, and the third place 5 and so on.

The problem with the game is the popularity index. This controls the length of the game since the game ends when one player reaches the top of the index. Players advance one space for each vote token played and move backwards for each vote token removed from the board (through card play by an opponent). The problem is the index has a snowballing effect, the leader/s gaining more of an advantage as the

game progresses, as certain spaces on the index allow the players to pick another vote token, pick up floating vote tokens, or pick up absentee vote tokens (a generic form of support in each region). So the index forces players to stay even at all costs, and allows very little flexibility in board movement. Coupled with the extreme power of the campaign cards, this is just too much for the game system to handle and all the wonderful ideas fall apart.

However, the problem is not easily fixed. Sure, you can play without the campaign cards and the index, giving the absentee votes out some other way and having the game last a specified number of turns. This makes an okay game, but it's like throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Of course, by now you're probably expecting me to have a quick and easy solution. Sorry about that. I don't. But I'd love to see someone take the time to fix this game, because it could be a great one. Right now, it's just a mess of potential.

## WESTMINSTER

H P Gibsons and Sons,  
1983

Available, price £12.95

**Components:** gameboard, 32 plastic pieces representing members of Parliament, 6 Prime Ministers, 12 cabinet ministers, 120 marker pegs (20 of each of six colours), 6 bills, 1 state of the party pad, 32 constituency cards, 40 despatch box cards, 96 vote cards, rules.

This is another game full of potential, but which suffered from being rushed out to coincide with a real election. If I were to say the rules are sloppy too, you'd probably stop right here. Nevertheless, this game has a number of things going for it. The General Election which starts the game is well thought out though the rules are a little ambiguous concerning tied by-elections.

The object of the game is to present a Bill before Parliament and obtain three readings for it, whereupon it passes into law. To this extent the game simulates the British Parliamentary system with all its attendant weirdness. The real

problems lie in trying to get a third reading for your bill, because no coalitions are possible at this point. In effect, this means the game drags on and on. Probably like one of the Right Honourable Member's speeches (cries of 'hear, hear'). As it stands, the 'noes' have it.

## DIE MACHER

Hans im Gluck, 1987  
Available, price varies  
around £25

**Components:** Bonn board, 4 region boards, 11 region cards, 28 cabinet member cards (7 in each of four colours), 24 opinion poll cards, 2 donation cards, 42 party program cards, 48 opinion cards, 4 identical wooden sets of playing pieces (8 record cubes, 15 voting cubes, 4 trend discs, 3 party plaques, 5 media counters and 14 pawns in three sizes representing party bases), 2 sequence of play sheets, 2 cabinet member explanation cards, 2 score pads, a pack of money, 3 special dice, a debate marker, rules.

I've saved the best for last, because you deserve some sort of reward for reading this far. And make no mistake about it, for the real *spießfreak*, ownership of *Die Macher* is a must.

If you haven't seen this game, you're probably thinking that's some list of components. In fact, the game is so heavy you definitely want to avoid positioning it on the top of a stack of games.

This is a complicated game. The English translation isn't too bad, but the game play itself is very involved. If it has a problem, and I don't think it does, it may be that it is a tough game to teach. You almost have to play a turn or two with a new player and then start over. Not that experience is everything, mind. I still manage to make some incredible mistakes. The game doesn't let you get away with a blunder easily either. It is not uncommon to hear something like, 'I can't believe I did that,' either from an opponent or from your own mouth.

To give you an idea of what I mean, here's the unique set-up and sequence of play.





Hats off to Die Macher designer  
Karl-Heinz Schmiel

Set-up

- 1) Players decide which party they will play and receive \$2 000.
- 2) Players place their trend discs and vote markers on each region. Players place three party bases in Bonn.
- 3) Players choose which 5 of their 7 party cabinet members they will use in the game.
- 4) Players receive their party program card and are dealt four additional program cards at random.
- 5) The Bonn board and the four region boards are placed on the table. Players set up the first four regions by placing one region card face up over each region board. Four opinion cards are placed on each region board. In the region nearest Bonn where the first election will take place, all four opinion cards are revealed. In the next region, three are revealed and one remains secret. In the third region two are revealed and two secret, and in the fourth one is revealed and three secret.

Sequence of Play

- 1) Players may attend party conferences where they can change 1 or 2 of their programs.

- 2) Players can send cabinet members to regions to debate, gain control of the media, acquire votes, or to boost the party or smear an opponent's party image.
- 3) Eligible parties may form a coalition.
- 4) Players purchase media advertising to gain control of the media in regions.
- 5) Players decide how many campaign meetings to attend in each region and pay the travel expenses.
- 6) Players bid for control of the opinion poll in each region.
- 7) The result of the campaigning in each region is assessed by using a formula: number of campaign meetings  $\times$  the trend factor  $\times$  the agreement factor (the number of programs which match the region's opinions).
- 8) The election in the current region is resolved using another formula: vote share number + the agreement factor

- 10) Players receive income from the election and accept donations.
- 11) The regional boards are rearranged and a new region card is revealed. One additional opinion is revealed in each region.
- 12) The procedure begins again, unless the seventh election has been completed, in which case the Federal Election is resolved using a third formula: media tokens in Bonn  $\times$  10 + agreements with the federal opinion  $\times$  10 + number of party bases  $\times$  number of total votes in all regional elections.

If that doesn't whet your appetite, nothing will. You've often heard the phrase, 'a minute to learn, a lifetime to master.' Well, **Die Macher** takes more than a minute to learn and you'll probably never master it. Every game is truly different as the regions, opinions, programs and opponents' strategies all change. As in **Schoko & Co**, this game makes you play yourself as well as the opponents.

Medien

Bonn

Bundesmeinung

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Parteibasis

CDU
SPD
FDP
Grüne

- $\times$  the number of votes. All players' vote totals are recorded. The winner may then change regional opinions into federal opinions, and move one of his media markers into Bonn.
- 9) Players receive party bases for their programs which match the federal opinion.

One suggestion I can offer to make a great game better. Instead of dealing out the region cards randomly, make Bremen the first region to be contested. This will prevent any player from gaining too large an advantage from the first election, just because his initial program cards match the opinion cards in the region. Even better, let each



player choose one of the four opinion cards for the first region, instead of dealing them randomly (*another option to ensure a balanced start is to remove one of each type of programme card before dealing them out. This ensures that there will be one of each policy available in the programme deck, and avoids an immediate three party squeeze on particular policies – Ed.*).

The rules state that seven regions be contested. Don't be afraid to use less or more. The only thing you need to do is proportionately alter the number of cabinet members at the same time. If you want to contest 8 or 9 regions, use 6 cabinet members instead of 5. If you want to contest 5 or 6 use 4.

I just received another game designed by Karl-Heinz Schmiel called **Lieber Bairisch Sterben** ('Better to die Bavarian') about the Peasant Revolt in Bavaria in 1705, which makes the same type of first impression. The box isn't anywhere near as heavy as **Die Macher**, but the components make the game look just as intriguing. I don't have the

English rules yet (which, of course, is driving me crazy), but I'm trying to be patient because translating a 28 page rulebook will take some time.

One other election game I should mention is **President Elect**, a computer game published by SSI. The second edition is still available. I have the first edition so I don't know what changes were made, except that the second edition runs a lot faster. You can play against the computer or against a human opponent, and the strength of the game is that both versions work very well. Most of your decisions involve what to spend your money on and where to campaign. The features include fatigue from campaigning too much, a detailed debate procedure, and much more. If you like computer games, this is one of the best around.

To summarise, everyone should have copies of **Mr President** and **Die Macher**. **President Elect** too, if you like computer games. **Campaign Trail** is a maybe depending on your taste. **Landslide** and **Who Can Beat Nixon?**

are only for collectors or people who like very simple games. With some medical treatment and tender loving care, both **Election** and **Westminster** might be good, but if you've got the time and the inclination, start with **Election**. Unless your cat likes games better than his regular litter box, **Presidential Campaign** should be avoided.

There are at least six other election boardgames out there somewhere: **Hat In The Ring** and **Run For President** (unknown publishers), **The Next President** (Reiss, 1971), **Campaign: A Game Of American Politics** (Campaign Game Co, 1966), **Candidate** (Shaw Games, 1979), and **Running For President** (Candidates Inc, 1982). I don't have any of these, but I am looking for copies. If you have one that you want to get rid of, please drop me a line: Alan R Moon, 11 Broadway, Apt 1, Beverly, MA 01915 USA.

### Derek Carver *unearths some more election games and gives them the once-over*

With these few additions I don't pretend that the list is fully exhaustive. Several election games have departed from my collection with a degree of alacrity equalled only by the enthusiasm with which they were originally acquired. Those that remain do so because they are either good games or because there is something sufficiently unusual about them to make them worth keeping. Among those not on Alan's list are the following:

## ELECTION L-GAME

De Bono Games

This came out three years ago, I think. I can't ever remember seeing it in the shops although I suppose it must have been sold somewhere (I was given my copy). In physical appearance the game is exactly the same as Edward de Bono's

famous L-Game. The fighting of the election is done in much the same way as playing the L-Game, votes being gained or lost according to which of the 16 squares are left uncovered at the end of a player's move. As an example of the rules:

'EEC DISPUTE: If both the *EEC dispute* and the *Media attention* squares are left uncovered at the end of a Government Party player's move then that player loses 1%. If both these squares are left uncovered at the end of an Opposition Party player's move then that player gains 1%.'

Although I found it pretty dull, the **Election L-Game** was nicely presented with good quality pieces. Coincidentally, in general appearance and presentation it was in many ways similar to the following game.

## LA MANIPE

Fibonnacci, 1985

A most unusual game, this one. The components comprise a frame – rather like a picture frame – printed both sides with red and blue lines (the lines on

each side being in a different position) and nine double-sided plaques that fit inside the frame. It is a game of political careers rather than true elections. Six of the plaques represent twelve candidates – two have socialists both sides and two have liberals both sides. The other two have one of each. In addition there are three Action plaques. During his turn a player has to place a piece or turn the frame over. A round ends when the 'picture' is complete and is scored according to which piece is next to which (including the colours on the frame) modified by the Action plaques.

## POLITICO

Jeux TM, circa 1985

Although there is a board of sorts this is basically a card game comprising 165 good quality playing cards. Not surprisingly, each player represents a political party endeavouring to acquire the maximum political activity points. All of this is done by somewhat complex card play, during which players launch attacks on each other, defend against such attacks, try to form a government or bring one down. As an example of the



rules here is the rule concerning the acquisition of points:

'In addition to points gained or lost during the course of card play players score as under:

'When a government survives a full round of play each member of a coalition in power marks an additional number of points equal to the number of deputies he has. The Prime Minister gets an additional 30 points.

'When a government falls following an attack each member of the coalition in power loses 50 points and the player launching the attack gains 50 points and takes 20 deputies from the deposed Prime Minister.'

This gives you an idea of the flavour of this game, but before you go chasing a copy for your collection, be warned – there's a prodigious amount of French on each card so you would need competent French speakers in order to play it.

## AL PARLAMENTO

Clementi, circa 1980

This is not only the best political game in my collection, it is also one of the best games of all time. As published it comprises three linked games. In the first, players play a card game and in so doing accumulate support points for a political party that they represent. This support comes from major interests such as the financial institutions, trade unions etc, thus imposing upon the party political pressures that make their presence felt in game three. With these points they move on to the second game (the election), allocating points to different electioneering issues. How well they play this second game determines precisely how many deputies they manage to get into Parliament. Game three is the really clever idea, which is the actual parliamentary sessions.

Each player places the deputies he acquired in game two in a pictorial representation of the parliamentary chamber. According to the party they represent, each player may be permitted to form a governmental coalition with certain other players. The party with the largest representation is

invited to attempt to form a government.

Assuming a government is successfully formed, various motions are then put forward. This is cleverly done using three decks of cards which, as they are turned, form a sentence – this being the motion put before the house. It is important for the government to win each vote, otherwise it will fall.

The problem facing each player is that he cannot always vote as he would like. Amongst other restrictions are where his finances come from. The support group will wish its party to vote a certain way on some issues and if that party fails to do so three deputies leave the party and join each of the other parties which voted in accordance with the pressure group's wishes.

If you are politically astute you will surprise everybody and vote against your pressure group's wishes – your opponents meanwhile having assumed you will obey your 'master's' instructions – and hope that all other parties vote likewise. In this case you lose no deputies!

The interesting point about the game is that the members of the government are allowed to leave the room and discuss the voting tactics they will use, but the other players (not being a united opposition) are not allowed to confer, each having to guess the best tactics to employ.

Each time a government wins a vote all members of the government receive a success disc. Each time a government is brought down (it's a skilful Prime Minister who can survive more than five votes) members of the opposition receive success discs; disenchanted deputies then desert the governmental coalition to join the opposition. This all results in a dramatic change in the size of the parties and the president then asks the new largest party to form a government.

Once during the life of each government one player can propose a vote of 'no confidence' (the timing of this is important) and once during the game one player can propose that parliament be prematurely dissolved, which means, should it be passed, the game begins again from the start – each player keeping the success discs he's already won, of course.

I made no attempt to buy this wonderful game for my collection for a variety of reasons. Firstly, being an Italian game it was not easy to get hold of, but, more importantly, it was of extremely poor quality. I felt that such a good game needed to be of a higher production standard, so I made my own. In doing so I changed the beginning combining, in effect, games one and two. Also, because the game is deeply rooted in Italian politics I slightly modified game three to make it more flexible. It really is a unique game.

And now for something completely different . . .

## PLAYING POLITICS

by Michael Laver  
Penguin Books, 1979

The author is a games enthusiast and a university lecturer in Politics. The games are 'educational' in that each is intended to illustrate a particular point, but unlike the vast majority of educational games, which are dire, these are sophisticated in the extreme. The book contains seven games, which are far too diverse to describe here. All I can say is that they are most unusual and involve a minimum of equipment.

I suppose I should end by mentioning political games that are still obtainable. One is *Votum* by Mattel (Germany), (*a game which seems to consist of people shouting at one another, therefore the most accurate simulation of party politics* – Ed) and another from Spain. Though Spain is not a country noted for games of any substance this might prove to be an exception. It is called *The Political Game* by Pleasure Games. All that our games group has so far are the rules that have been sent over for translation; to date we've not seen the game itself. But the rules seem promising so, as with politics, we live in hope.

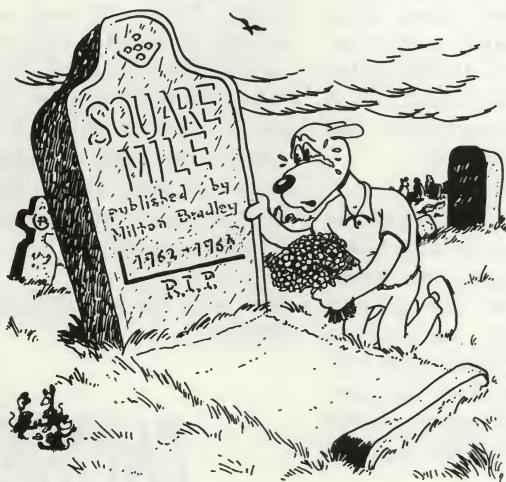
Finally I will immodestly state that I have invented an election game that has been popular with a number of groups for quite a long time. It is at present with a publisher for consideration. So who knows – if they go ahead there will be another election game on the market. I will certainly include it in my collection and encourage you to do likewise!



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## Where Did They Move Square Mile?

by Phil Orbanes

In 1962 The Milton Bradley Company published a super game called **Square Mile**. At the risk of exaggerating, I think the game was nothing less than a sheer delight to behold – and play. Yet the game vanished from this giant company's line in a few short years. Why? Two eye-opening reasons.

To give these reasons the impact they deserve, I think it best first to acquaint you with the game.

Imagine, if you will, those last pristine days before television became the all-powerful force of marketing it is today. In those long-forgotten times, major new products were promoted by print advertising. So it was with **Square Mile**. While the game must have received promotion on a small scale (by today's standards), my game-playing friends and myself first became aware of the game through Christmas catalogues.

And just looking at the bulging box of game parts in the colour advertisement was enough to make us put the game at the top of our shopping lists. While most board games use internal platforms to fill the 'air' in the base of the package, every square inch of **Square Mile** was filled by 'goodies'. There were plastic streets, railroads, houses, apartment buildings, factories, schools and churches. Plus large property tokens, zoning cards, planning cards, and a property value chart. And the board itself was so large it had to fold into thirds to fit inside the formidable package.

Now size is seldom equated with quality, especially these days. But **Square Mile** delivered play quality as well as physical quality (the parts were not only handsomely designed, but functional as well).

How did it play? Beautifully. Every game different, every game posing a unique and satisfying challenge.

The gameboard depicted sixteen undeveloped property tracts, arranged in a four-by-four rectangle. Through the skilful, multiple use of the 'Planning Cards', these properties were 'zoned' before play began in such a way that the board took on a new look before each game. First a railroad was laid down (in a straight line through four tracts). Each of these tracts was immediately designated an Industrial Zone, where only factories could be erected. Next, the tract encompassing the school was designated; and all tracts around the school were zoned for housing. The shopping centre zone came next; all tracts around this one (as yet unzoned) were allocated for apartment buildings. Finally, the church's zone was positioned. The board was now ready for play. It should be noted that one or more tracts might still be undeveloped at this point, creating an important strategic imbalance for exploitation later in the game. (Any available building could be constructed on an 'unzoned' tract.)

Beginning with \$100 000 cash, each player now secretly recorded bids to purchase the tract(s) of his choice. The

bids were revealed and the highest bidder for a tract took possession of it, marking it with a property token of his colour.

Now came a suspenseful element of play: the random placement of the first road section, according to the draw of another planning card. However, even this element of luck was neatly turned into a tactical manoeuvre, because each player was now permitted to add a road section to either end of his initial road. Each such road extended from one end of the boundary between two tracts to the other end. To hold these plastic roads in place, the board was preloaded with plastic 'boundary markers' that served as joiners.

Now began the main part of the game: development.

During this phase, the game itself served as the buyer and seller of all property (it being stocked with millions of dollars of game money).

On his turn, a player could first sell any tract he owned to the game's bank. Then he could build on any tract still held. Finally, he could buy (from the game's bank) any one additional tract (no matter what its state of development) at the price indicated on the game's value card.

Development required real skill, because the value of each property rose in fits and spurts depending upon its state of development. First, roads had to be constructed on all four sides of the



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tract (since adjacent tracts shared a road section, it helped to develop after your opponent did the honour of constructing such a 'common' byway). Next, a plastic 'tic-tac-toe' grid was inserted within the property (for a price, naturally). This was called the subdivision. In effect, it simulated internal streets within the tract.

Thereafter, the main building of the tract could be built – depending upon the zone designated before development began. Each type of building had a different value. Schools, churches, and housing were the cheapest (\$25 000 each) while apartments were the most expensive (\$100 000). Armed with but \$100 000 to start play, a capital 'crunch' began to affect your expensive planning quite early.

And that crunch engendered one of the game's most intriguing competitive elements: selling.

Your \$100 000 would go far enough to buy two tracts at game's start, four roads (\$10 000 each), and perhaps a subdivision (\$25 000). At this point, you'd be broke, but one of your properties would be enclosed by roads and fully subdivided. It would have a fixed value of \$125 000. By selling it, you'd be able to rush your other property to full completion – enclosing it with roads, subdividing it, and building upon it. A tract, so completed, with a house, for example, would bring you \$200 000 on the open market. A similar property with an apartment building would garner \$300 000!

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Thus, smart play required a quick turn of cash by partially developing a property, selling it, and then fully developing another property. Thereafter, the fate of victory was decided by how you reinvested the second sale's proceeds.

You could now go into the real estate market-place and buy a previously sold (but partially undeveloped) tract. For example, you might buy a subdivided industrial tract for \$125 000; quickly build a factory on it; sell it on the following turn for \$250 000, doubling your money in two short turns.

But buying such partially developed tracts was no cinch. To do so, you first had to put the tract up for public auction during step three of your turn. Now, your hungry – and perhaps envious – competitors got a chance to thwart your quick 'killing' by forcing the price sky-high, or worse yet, out-bidding your cash resources. For this reason, cash was usually kept out of sight during play, adding to the suspense.

The game ended when the sixteenth (and final) tract was purchased. At the end of that player's turn, all assets were converted to cash – at market fixed prices – and the winner was the player with the most money.

The game was deceptively simple (buying, selling, developing). But the elegance of its rules permitted considerable room for wheeling and dealing. For example, before building a road that would benefit a 'neighbour', you might extract a fee from him. Or, before bidding, you might pay a fee to another player in return for his pledge to refrain from jacking up the price. And finally, the game provided for advanced play, using some additional rules including the addition of a winding river. In both the regular and advanced versions, a special road section

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featuring a 'bridge' had to be erected – at a stiffer price – when superimposed on a river. And, to further broaden game tactics, one zone was designated as 'the swamp', requiring an extra development payment of \$5 000 to fill it.

**Square Mile** was the kind of game that shouldn't have died. But it did.

So what were the two reasons? The suggested age appeal on the package, and marketing 'overkill'.

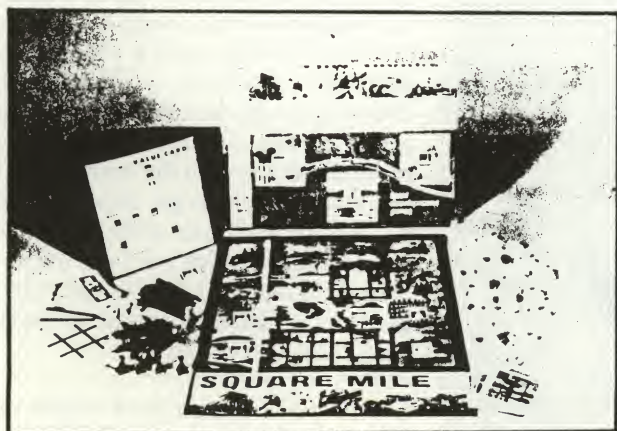
The box said 'for ages 12 and up'. Back in 1962, that was almost a kiss of death for a mass market game. (At the time, only Avalon Hill had the courage to so rate their products – and they were a fraction of Milton Bradley's size). Secondly, the saturation marketing programme of Milton Bradley stocked the shelves everywhere in the first year, enabling all consumers in the target market (12 years and up) to become aware of the game. By the second year of the product's existence, all those enlightened teenagers and adults who wanted the game had it. And for a company of Milton Bradley's size, the resultant drop-off in sales triggered elimination from its product line.

In retrospect, it seems that the game was not so difficult a nine or ten year old couldn't play it. Labelling the package 'down' to this age would have increased sales in the second and third year of the game's life; sufficiently so, perhaps, to cause Bradley to renew their promotion of the item which would have further bolstered sales.

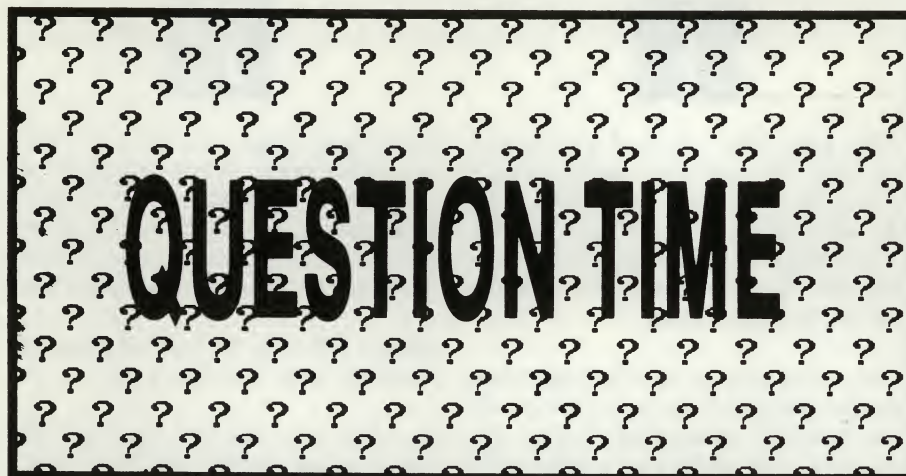
But that didn't happen and a great game died as a consequence.

If brought back today, **Square Mile** might need some modernisation, but its essential play qualities would be very attractive to all game players who enjoy financial manipulation. However, the price of the game would be very high, because of all the plastic pieces and assemble done at the factory. Yet, it would be a tragedy to see this kind of quality compromised.

*This article originally appeared in Games & Puzzles, and is reprinted with permission.*







*Trivia games – the  
good, the bad and  
the ridiculous  
rounded up by  
Brian Walker with  
playtesting  
assistance from  
the GI brains trust*

**Q** In which film did Marilyn Monroe sing 'I wanna be loved by you'?

Absolutely no idea, but I sure wish I'd seen it.

This was one of the questions from **Capital Adventure**, the first game we played, and it set a standard that couldn't be beat, both in terms of component quality and play value.

The box blurb recommends the game as suitable for 13 year olds and up, though I'd suggest you'd have to be at least 16 just to carry the thing. This box is hea-yy. The main reason for this is the massive triple fold playing board, plus three boxes of questions.

The essence of the game, like most of the genre, is answer a question correctly, place a marker, first one with

all the slots/lines filled wins. However, there are important additions which lift this game above the competition. The object here is to travel round the world stopping off at all the major cities, which for the purposes of the game are designated 'Capital Cities'.

To travel you must raise cash, and to do this you answer questions, collecting \$200 for every correct answer, a sort of Round the World in Eighty Questions. The cost of your journey varies according to distance. As long as you answer questions correctly you can keep going, collecting your \$200 a shot. However, push your luck too far and you could hit a hazard – a 12-1 chance, but then again you could get lucky and collect a telex (ie cash) on a 24-1 chance.

If you come to a border then you have the option of paying \$500, or answering

two 'Visa' questions which are generally tougher than the rest and also pertain to the country you are leaving or entering. Unfortunately I got stuck at the Australian checkpoint, which coincidentally has a real life parallel when, upon visiting the former colony, I jovially attempted to remind the immigration bureaucrat of his country's ancestry:

**Bureaucrat:** Do you have a criminal record?

**Jovial traveller:** You mean you still need one to get in?

But so much for self indulgent anecdotes. An alternative to the 'Visa' version is the simpler 'Diplomat' format, where you forego the visa questions. This results in a much shorter game. We played the Visa rules and the playing time ran to three hours, and though readers will undoubtedly disagree, we considered ourselves to be more than averagely knowledgeable.

Although the game works well as it is there is room for improvement. Firstly the deportation rule: if you hit a hazard and cannot pay the resultant fine, then you could be deported if you have not kept the insurance policy for the country you are in, and which you are given at the outset. As these are redeemable for cash the tendency is to sell them. If you do get deported then you are effectively out of the game, such is the distance which you have to travel back. To counteract this I would suggest that you only move back as far as the last capital city you visited.

Secondly: there is no good reason why questions should not be offered round

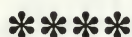




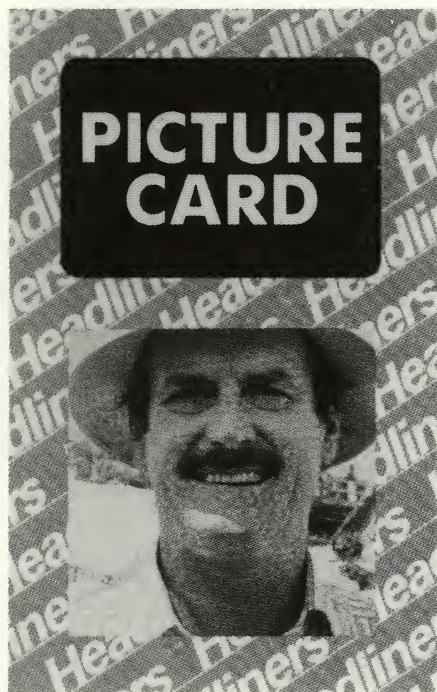
the table when an incorrect answer is proffered.

This would have the effect of speeding the game up through extra cash becoming available, as well as providing constant involvement for all players.

It would have been useful to have alternative routes on your travels, as it quickly becomes apparent there is only one optimum route to follow to reach the Capitals. But no matter. The heart of these type of games must be the questions and these are excellent, striking the right balance between tough and easy, and fun and educational. This is a very good game for 2-4 players (or teams) whose appetite for trivia is insatiable, and who like a bit of strategy thrown in too.



*Capital Adventure* is published by Mattel (UK), price £29.95.



*A man called . . . ?*

The **Capital Adventure** box consists of a trunk plastered with travel labels from exotic locations, so it's a definite step downmarket to see the face of none other than Sid Yobbo adorning the box cover of our next game up for trial, **Headliners**, based on the Thames TV programme.

Sid Yobbo, or Derek Jameson, as he is sometimes known, is always keen to remind readers that he started out as a delivery boy in the Street of Shame.



Many would say he worked his way down, but that's another story.

The object of this game is to guess the subject of newspaper headlines, hence Sid's tie-in. Neither his presence, nor the very poor production quality offer any reassurance that there is a good game here, a fact which is to be confirmed an hour later.

The play sequence is simple; roll a die to discover the year on which you are to answer a question, then roll again to find out the subject. Get a question right and mark off the appropriate section on the pad. First player to complete all sections wins.

So simple you wouldn't think there could be anything wrong, and yet: one group of cards is entitled *Who Am I?* Should you have to answer this problem you then roll a die to discover the number of clues you get. Should you have the misfortune to roll a 1, then your only clue is 'I am a man/woman'. In fact, unless you roll at least a 4, you might as well give up.

There is also a set of picture cards which operate in a similar way. But what happens when you go through the pack once? Presumably this game is not intended for repeated use. Perhaps this might be acceptable in a product costing six or seven pounds, but at this price?

The cards are of poor quality as is the overall production. The questions themselves are not without interest, but

produce little excitement as they are married to such a minimal game system.

The rulebook contains only rules for two teams, though there seems to be no reason why you can't play as individuals.



*Headliners* is published by Paradigm. Price £16.95.

**Q** Which US state's name comes from the Algonquian for warriors?

That one would probably fox Sid, and the rest of the Street of Shame too. For here we are in the rather more refined world of **Origins**, which the accompanying blurb claims is 'far from trivial', while the box makes a bold bid to enter the Guinness Book of Records by stating that the game is for '2-30 players'. Delving into the origins, as it were, it quickly becomes clear that what we have here is noughts and crosses with questions. Nothing wrong with that, in fact it works very well, and, like **Capital Adventure**, adds a strategic element as you have options as to placement of your markers. The problem here is the questions; they are tough. Tacit recognition is given to this by the fact that three alternatives are provided in the way of answers. So if you don't know you simply guess, which seems a trifle unsatisfactory. If you guess or answer correctly then you place one of the Dolly Mixture markers on the quadrant corresponding to your



die roll. The first player to get five markers in a line any which way is the winner.

The production of the game is solid, as indeed it should be for the price. There are 1 000 Q and A cards provided, all printed on good quality stock, so the replay potential is enormous.

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*Origins is published by Jordans Games. Price £29.95.*

**Q** What percentage of modern teenagers report that they have lost their virginity by the age of 18?

After the cerebral strain of *Origins*, plus the stress of turning this session into readable copy, what could be more welcome than a dose of *Therapy*? A few swigs of *Jack Daniels* perhaps, but for now an hour on the couch will have to suffice. This is not so much a trivia game as part of a sub-genre known as an 'ice breaker' – it fills in that awkward first hour at dinner parties where everybody is too sober to talk. In truth though, this is a game which should be played with either your family, or close friends.

The object is to move your little plastic couch around the board using dice, and attempting to 'cure' the other players. If someone lands on your 'office' then you read out a *Therapy* question, the answers of which are rated on a scale of 1–10, for example: 'So tell me, on a rating scale of 1–10, how much of a perfectionist are you?'. The patient writes down his answer and you yours. If the answers match within 1, then you have cured the patient and you place a 'mastery peg' in your couch.

These pegs may also be obtained by answering an *Insight* question which are subdivided into categories such as childhood and seniority. First to get a couchful of six pegs wins.

Nothing wrong with this game, it's just that the overall feeling is rather like that of waking up after a Julio Iglesias concert: pleasant enough, but was it really worth ninety minutes of my life?

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*Therapy is published by Milton Bradley. Price £17.95.*



**Q** What I enjoy doing most is . . . ?

We continue our journey through the ice with this question from *I Think You Think I Think*, to which a selection of entirely innocent answers are provided.

The game is very similar in concept to *Therapy*, but with the important addition of betting. Here you can wager just how your opponent will answer, or lie most probably. The betting system is well worked out and adds a lot to the second-guessing nature of the game. Starting off with 600 points, the winner is the first to amass 2 000. Beware though, for you can slip to zero.

The questions (and optional answers) could have been a bit raunchier in order to *really* break the ice, but perhaps this is a reflection of the game's American origins. Other than that, I think that you will think that this is an excellent party game for 2–6 players. I think.

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*I Think You Think I Think is published by TSR. Price £14.95.*

**Q** Ubi Ngo Dinh Diem done in?

The games industry has reason to be grateful to Horn Abbot, the inventors of *Trivial Pursuit*, not least for the renewed interest (and sales), that their seminal production generated. Unfortunately, the reverse is likely to occur with the release of *Ubi*, the King Midas in Reverse syndrome with a vengeance. The big question here is

how this game ever got past the playtest stage, or perhaps this simply got bypassed in the belief that packaging and the legend 'from the makers of *Trivial Pursuit*' would suffice?

The problems start with the name – latin for 'where', but how many people know that? The rules are written in a kind of mumbo jumbo full of arcane references, hardly the stuff of which trivia is comprised. The components are well made, though it takes a while to figure out what you're supposed to do with them, but the 'board', although graphically superb, resembles nothing so much as a lino tablecloth from Marks and Sparks.

The real downer, though, is the selection of questions, all prefaced with the latin of the game's moniker which means, of course, that the answers all refer to locations. The questions themselves are not only too difficult for a game of this nature, but downright *dull*. And not even answering them correctly is enough; you then have to find the location on the map and read off the grid reference. The wrong answer in most trivia games at least generates a few laughs, but here there isn't even that consolation, for it's hard to imagine that reading off the wrong grid reference would elicit anything other than indifference.

At £29.95 the question is not so much *where*, as *cur*?

\*

*Ubi is published by San Serif. Suitable for 2–4 players.*



## Q Name the team with the nickname 'The Seasideers'

The answer to the above question would give two namechecks to my hometown in one issue. But that's not the only reason I like Quizball so much.

As you may have deduced this is a game about football, a subject on which there are remarkably few good games, making this offering all the more welcome. Not surprisingly, the object here is to score goals through the correct answering of questions. The closer you move to your opponent's goal, the more difficult the questions become.

The 'pitch' consists of coloured circles representing the two teams, while the inner circle is colour coded to the question cards. When you answer a question correctly you roll a die and move the ball accordingly, though it is difficult to move in a

straight line. A bit like England, in fact. There is also a 1 in 6 chance that you will

roll either a 'corner kick' card, or that a Vinnie Jones style 'incident' will occur, which means the ball will be placed in the spot thus designated. Unfortunately, you cannot get sent off in this game. No hooligans either, though play it with a few cans and you could have the first lager lout simulation game.

The playing time is 90 minutes, presumably plus 10 minutes for half time. This is essentially a team game, and as such, is highly recommended for anyone with an interest in the greatest game in the world.

'Well Brian, I just answered the question first time and the next thing I knew was the ball was in the back of the net'.

\*\*\*\*

Quizball is published by Keelannie Promotions. Price £19.95.



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# The Twilight Zone

*You are travelling through a dimension of small, cheaply produced booklets . . .*

**John Harrington ventures into the forbidden realm of fanzines, starting with the devious world of *Diplomacy*.**

We ought to start with a definition of the word 'fanzine'. The term is a marriage of the words 'fan' and 'magazine'. Normally when fans and magazines interface (to use a dreadful piece of computer jargon) the end result is large profits for the publishing company. Or so the esteemed editor and publisher of GI hopes (*Does he indeed?* – Ed). Occasionally, however, a fan decides he wants to be a producer rather than a consumer. Don't ask me why; perhaps he's been force fed Party Political Broadcasts on the wonders of the entrepreneurial society. The end result of such a desire is a 'fanzine' – a publication produced by an enthusiastic amateur and sold to punters of similar persuasion.

Virtually every hobby has its own fanzines. To my certain knowledge there are fanzines on the subjects of punk music, soccer, comics, science

fiction, ham radio and possibly even ham sandwiches. This is a games magazine, however, and you want to know about gaming fanzines, right?

Let us divide zines up into six categories then, and take each classification individually. The six categories are: *Diplomacy*, Multi-games, Rolegames, Chat (or Personal), Sports Management and Hybrids. This issue I'll take a look at *Diplomacy* zines.

When I am boring people witless at parties and I mention that I run games by post, those that are still going through the motions of being polite say 'Oh yes? How's that done?'

I then explain to them about games fanzines. Pretty soon I am rattling on, totally oblivious to the fact that my attentive listener has defected to the kitchen where they are talking about something more interesting, such as hosiery embroidery. Consequently I wouldn't blame you if you skipped the next few paragraphs as I launch into my party piece of how board games are played by post . . .

An editor of a magazine seeks players for a game. When he has the required number of players, he announces a gamestart, and prints all the players' addresses, so they can write to each other and negotiate. He also prints their starting positions and says something like 'Okay, I want your first set of orders in by Friday the 22nd.'

units, and sets a deadline for turn two. So it goes until the game ends.

All quite ingenious. So ingenious it is possible that no one would have thought of it unless the game of *Diplomacy* had been invented back in the sixties. *Diplomacy's* (then) unique system of simultaneous ordering, as opposed to the traditional *Monopoly* style of sequential moves, meant that the game was supremely adaptable to postal play. It took a few years for the first postal *Diplomacy* zine to emerge, but since then the postal games scene has grown and grown.

Since the advent of *Diplomacy* zines (or 'Dipzines' as they are often called), a multitude of other games have been adapted to postal play, some with more success than others. Only *Railway Rivals* and *Sopwith*, among commercially produced games, have come close to matching *Diplomacy's* suitability for postal play – and when I say 'close' I mean it in the same way as when I say 'Frank Bruno is close to winning the world title.' Know what I mean, Harry?

For the breed of person who believes there is one and only one postal board game there is the purist *Diplomacy* zine. Still, in many cases, cranked out on an old duplicator by the editor himself, these zines generally cost about 50p (including postage), run to about 22 pages, come out every 4 or 5 weeks and contain page after page of adjudications for umpteen *Diplomacy* games. Often there will be a one-page editorial at the front, and maybe there will be a letters page or an article on *Diplomacy* theory, but essentially the zine exists as a vehicle to play *Diplomacy*.

Unless you are a rabid student of the game, Dip adjudications do not make very interesting reading, despite the inclusion of 'Press' columns where players communicate openly with each other in the pages of the zine. Therefore, if you are interested in a good read, purist Dip zines are probably not for you. If you want to play



The players then send their orders in to the editor (or to an independent adjudicator who has agreed to run the game), and he then processes their orders, moving all their units, throwing the dice (if necessary) and so on. The editor then prints a summary of what happened on turn one, and an update on the position of the players'



**Diplomacy** by post, however, put yourself down on the waiting list.

Of course, good **Diplomacy** zines attract a lot of players, and you may have to wait a while before you get to the top of the waiting list and actually secure yourself a game start. Fortunately, there are plenty of postal games zines around – about eighty at the last count – and the vast majority of them run **Diplomacy**, so it should be possible to get a game start fairly quickly.

Even if you have experience of the game face-to-face, it can be a daunting experience playing your first postal game. There are a lot of good players out there, and the scope for double-dealing, backstabbing, duplicity and downright underhand dirty tricks is much greater in the postal version. For this reason a gentleman named Danny Collman set up a zine called *Springboard* for novice postal **Dip** players only. It is available from Danny (14 Westover Road, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham B20 1JG) at a cost of 30p plus postage.

*Springboard* provides an ideal introduction into the postal **Diplomacy**

hobby. You can learn the ropes against other novices, and when you think you are ready for the 'big time' you can branch out into games run in other zines. The only drawback in playing with other novices is that some of them, to put it bluntly, may not have the staying power needed to complete a game of **Diplomacy**. A typical game takes two to three years to complete, and when your position looks hopeless after only six months, it takes real commitment to soldier on to the end. Consequently, players do tend to drop out, and this unbalances the game. Not that drop-outs are unheard of in non-novice games, but to drop out of a game is considered bad form throughout the hobby and veteran players are jealous of their reputations.

I would not advise sending off more than £2 subscription money to an editor until you get to know his reliability rating. Some zines have been going for over 140 issues and the only way you are going to stop them continuing to publish is by going round to the editor's house and bricking him up inside a false wall. You can probably risk sending a £5 cheque to these sort of chaps, but the chances are all their games will be full.

Having warned you of the reliability of editors, I should also give a warning about your own reliability. The postal games scene can be an alluring hobby, and there is a tendency for new entrants to sign up for more and more games until suddenly the workload involved in negotiations and sending in orders gets too much. In these situations the overworked player tends to disappear abruptly from the hobby, leaving behind a lot of angry people whose games have been ruined by the sudden absence of one player. So take it easy at first. Five games on the go at once is quite ample, at least until you get a good idea of your own capabilities – and remember, circumstances change. You might get married, move house, change job or start supporting Red Star Belgrade. The onus of reliability is not just on the editor.

Subscribing to fanzines is cheap and cheerful enjoyment, and if nothing else enables you to make friends (*and enemies!* – Ed) all over the country – indeed, all over the world, for other countries have their fanzines too.

*Next issue we take a look at zines running other games.*

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# Desert Island Games

*Water, water, everywhere, and nary a ship in sight. But Ellis Simpson has wisely stowed away some entertainment.*

The prospect of being locked away on a desert island with ten games of my choice gives me the same kind of problems that beset Alan Moon last issue: which ones to leave behind! The fact is, as with most preference lists, that the choices fluctuate from year to year or even month to month, but here are ten of my current favourites.

First is **Ambush** (Victory Games), a WW2 solitaire game system that actually works. True testimony to the game, the scenarios, and the production is that on no single occasion have I rerolled a combat result when one of my brave GI heroes has been cruelly mown down by a lucky shot. Well, maybe once. Or twice.

**Platoon** (Avalon Hill) is one of those rare beasts: a licensed product that is playable, fun and challenging. It's also the possessor of the shortest rulebook of any of these games so it would be the easiest to explain to any passing cannibals or shipwrecked pirates who were new to the hobby. **Air Superiority** (GDW) would be my air game. It's a step ahead of its rivals in playability combined with realism. It's also loaded with scenarios and packs plenty of gaming time into a slim box. The trouble is that I might have difficulty smuggling the add-on modules (**Air Strike**, **Desert Falcon** and so on) in that container!

To show that death and destruction would not be enough to pass away those long winter nights and summer days I would certainly want to pack **Statis Pro**

**Football** (Avalon Hill) provided I had the current player cards and somebody, somewhere, would send me the season updates. **Statis Pro** is the NFL game, unsurpassed in its recreation of the real bone crunching game. Yes, many's the game of **Statis Pro** that has had a time-out called for refreshments or advertisements.

To continue the pacifist streak I would plump for **The Metric Mile** (Lambourne Games), a vastly underrated game that pits past and present stars of the track against each other and the clock. The strength of this game is the way it avoids the race turning into a contest of who throws the highest dice most often. Clever, straightforward and very adaptable.

Back to the games where losing is really bad news with **Panzer Command** (Victory Games). This East Front tactical game never caught on despite being very playable solitaire and going out of its way to recreate actual battles on the actual terrain (as opposed to the more 'representative' terrain that most tactical games have to use with geomorphic maps) simply by focussing on the battleground of the Chir river. It would also be worth bringing because it includes a couple of modern tanks as examples of how the system would work in contemporary times. Armed with this and a modest reference library I would have designed the perfect modern tactical game by the time anyone came to rescue me. *If anyone came for me!*

Sixth on the list is another escapee from fame: **Marengo** (Historical Concepts). This is the playable and realistic Napoleonic system which was heavily inspired by the excellent miniatures set, **Empire**. It takes the detail found in **Wellington's Victory** (TSR) and shows that there is more to battle than just

dishing out orders. In this game you have to worry about your own troops as well as your opponent's. Now that's a step in the right direction. Any of the **South Mountain** system games, designed by Richard Berg and Jon Southard, would be my American Civil War choice. The original **South Mountain** (West End Games) was probably the easiest to play and brought new standards to that era of the hobby. My only quibble is the omniscient view one has of the battlefield and the enemy forces. Funny how it never seems to be enough for me when I play the game!

To close, two venerable worthies. **White Death** (GDW) was the first one map East Front game that didn't come with an in-built pro-German bias. It was a little-heard-of siege that was gifted with a brilliant game system and marvellous order of battle work by the GDW team. Their honesty and the finished product (like the earlier and almost classic **Operation Crusader**) made it playable many times over.

The last worthy is, arguably, the greatest game ever designed and certainly the greatest wargame ever to cast a shadow over the Western World. It is, of course, **Squad Leader** (Avalon Hill). John Hill (no relation) took cardboard counters and breathed new life into them. His WW2 tactical system has its flaws (not least the fact that troops who fail morale tests are 'broke' as opposed to 'broken!') and eventually gave birth to the massive **Advanced Squad Leader** project. However, the original system had more resilience than it was given credit for. What more can one ask of a single game that provides the Yanks, Nazis and Soviets all in one box?

*Next issue Cap'n Walker lets the passengers drown, but escapes with his ten favourite games.*





## THE CRITICS' CHOICE

*To set you up for the new year, we asked our team of reviewers to come up with their favourite games of 1988.*

### BRIAN WALKER

Mc Multi  
Schoko & Co  
Shogun  
6 Tage Rennen

### ELLIS SIMPSON

6-Tage Rennen  
Drive on Frankfurt  
West of Alamein  
Thunder at Cassino

### DEREK CARVER

Kremlin  
Forum Romanum  
Timber  
McMulti

### MIKE SIGGINS

6-Tage Rennen  
Lee vs Grant  
Buck Rogers  
McMulti

### ALAN MOON

Seaside Frolics  
Schoko & Co  
Barbarossa (ASS)  
6-Tage Rennen

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# SNIPER

## TAKES AIM AT THE MEDIA

### CAMRAG

Clunk! the sound of another press release hitting my desk, though this one looks to be more interesting than most. The sender appears to be SIGMA – the acronym for the rather portentous sounding Society for the Inventors of Games and Mathematical Attractions. 'Appears' is the operative word in this instance, for enclosed with the missive is promo literature for **Save the President**, a poignant title when you consider that the game was invented by SIGMA president Jack Jaffe.

The press release announces the launch of a 'Campaign For Real Games', to counter what it describes as games pitched at the 'moron level', and offering 'poor value for money'. Several games are listed as falling into these categories.

The media also comes under attack for its coverage of games. *The Observer* and *The Sunday Times* both get singled out for special criticism, in particular for 'not playing' the games they are supposed to be reviewing.

All worthy stuff, but who is going to support such a campaign? Certainly not the games companies, especially when their products are attacked in such an arbitrary manner. While journalists, whose support is essential to the success of any such campaign, will not take kindly to such criticism, however accurate that criticism may be.

The campaign scores a third own goal by naming two games produced or distributed by Jack Jaffe, as examples of the games that the public ought to be buying, thus undermining both the status of SIGMA as an objective body, and the campaign itself.

### Hacking It

SIGMA's press release was certainly on the mark when it described the media's coverage of games. Unlike other countries, no newspaper covers games

except at Christmas when a flood of reluctant staffers are despatched to investigate the games people make. As usual, the results were such a disaster one half expected Mrs Thatcher to turn up and console the victims.

One of the first hacks to file a report was the *Observer's* Jay Rayner, who had the distinction of being the only scribe to turn up at the aforementioned SIGMA press conference.

Rayner's piece was curiously entitled 'Good game, good game'. Curiously, because nowhere in the article was there any indication as to what might qualify for such an accolade. Wading through the padding, the emphasis was firmly on sales with little information for the punter hoping for a tip.

Next on the chopping block is Libby Purves, hackette for the once great newspaper the *Sunday Times*. Again there is more padding than a Heal's sofa, though she does admit to having actually *played* a game, in this instance **The Garden Game**.

Also getting a namecheck is **Ocean Trader** (reviewed issue #1), though more for its Christian origins than anything else.

The rest of the games mentioned are used simply as pegs on which to hang a lot of old coats. Libby does manage to score one Brownie point though, with the discovery of **The Bodleian Game**, a game about a library in Oxford. If it was April, I wouldn't believe it.

The *London Standard* interviewed Steve Nichols (BSc), editor of the astrology magazine *Games Monthly*, who according to the article 'tries out most of the thousand odd new games launched each year', a fact which must come as a surprise to both his readers. Steve (BSc) preferred to concentrate on the psychological aspect of games.

The article at least showed a willingness on the part of the writer to talk to others

more knowledgeable and so provide useful information for their readers, an approach not shared by the London listings magazine *Time Out*. The cover promised a feature on 'X-Rated Board Games', so it was something of a surprise to discover **The Game of Life** and **Hotel** featured prominently in the article. The fact that these games are 'X-rated', will no doubt come as news to Milton Bradley who advertise them both on children's TV. Any doubts about the airhead nature of the writer, Alix Sharkey, were dispelled when he described the rules of the family game **Poleconomy** as 'labyrinthine'. The tenor of the piece is perhaps best summed up by his attempt to dream up 'new' themes for games. 'Mafiosi': 'Build your own criminal network! Run gambling, drugs and prostitution! Shit on your friends'. Er, quite, but isn't there a game called **Mafioso** which allows you to do these very things? Research Alix, research.

TV gets in on the act now with *Daytime Live*. Remarkably, they managed to do the sensible thing and commissioned four 'typical families' to try out a few of the latest offerings, among which were **Dizzy Dinosaur** (MB), **Bewitched** (Waddingtons), **Storybook**, and an abstract game whose name escapes me. **Bewitched** and **Dizzy** both got the nod, but the remainder were deemed unimpressive. A sensible way of approaching games reviews, except for the implicit suggestion that games are only for children.

Your super soaraway *Sun* chose not to shed light on the matter, probably concluding correctly that their readers would be incapable of understanding even the simplest of rulebooks. Only recently they refused to print the word **Scrabble** on the grounds that their readers would 'not know what it meant'. The phrase 'a popular word game' was substituted instead.

The best shot of all at tackling the subject was by LBC radio and their *AM* programme. And who fired this stunning shot? Why, a sniper, of course.





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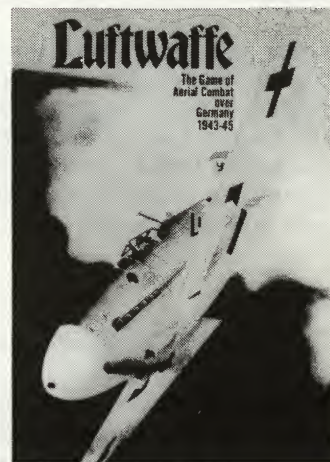
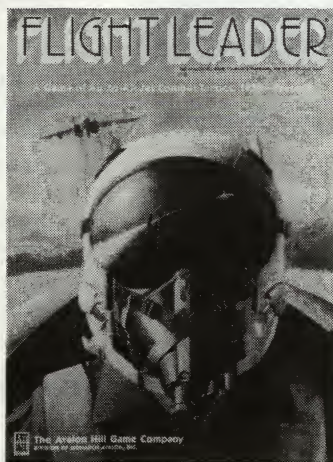
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# NEWS

## Out come the freaks

After the somewhat bleak picture painted by our editorial, it's nice to be able to report some good news for lovers of quality games. Eamon Bloomfield, proprietor of the retail outlet Games Unlimited in Kingston upon Thames, has launched a games company called Spielfreaks Ltd. The moniker refers to the nickname given to games enthusiasts in Germany. The aim of this new venture is to republish out of print classic games as well as original designs emanating from Eamon's own games group.

The first release in the classic series is **Family Business** (see review), originally published by Mayfair Games. Other projects on line include Sid Sackson's **Holiday**, which was recently published in a somewhat muddled version in Germany under the title **Das Erbe Des Maloney**, plus an original Sid Sackson card game.

## Forecast

Another classic game due to be revived next year is **Lose Your Shirt**, a horse racing game from the 70's which has been much sought after by collectors. The new title will be **First Past the Post**. The publication of this, and several other titles, marks the return of Waddingtons to the adult games market.

Other new games from Waddingtons that are likely to be of interest to our readers include **Topple**, a relaunch of the '83 game of 'tactics, balance and suspense'. **Greed**, an 'addictive dice game', plus a new range of attractively produced card games.

## EGA

Several of the small independent UK games companies have banded together to form a marketing group known as the European Games Agency. For the consumer this will mean greater choice and availability of games which do not get TV advertising.

The company has already had some success following the launch at the Essen Games Fair of German language editions of games like **Bottom Line**, and **Elixir**.

Director Stanley Wright eventually plans to have around fifty games under the auspices of EGA. Most of their releases planned for '89 will be premiered at the Earls Court Toy Fair in January and will include prototypes of **Driving Test**, **Gone Fishing**, and **Movie Mogul**. All games under the EGA banner will carry the symbol of 'excellence'.

## Welsh rare bits

Rostherne Games have several releases to mark the New Year. The long awaited **Peninsula War** is now available, as is **Slick** (see review). Rostherne are of course best known for their evergreen **Railway Rivals**, and to supplement this there are two new maps featuring London and Western and Southern Sweden.



## A word from your sponsors

Games International is (sort of) proud to announce that we will be sponsoring the **Victor Ludorum** tournament at this year's Babbacon. The tournament is, in effect, the UK national boardgames championship. The results of every game played are tabulated according to complexity and number of players. The information is then fed into a computer to determine a winner.

For every subscription received from registrants, both during and before the event, GI will contribute a game to the prize pool.

In addition to the **Victor Ludorum**, there will be **Britannia** and **Railway Rivals** tournaments. Though great fun, it is not

necessary to enter any of the tournaments. Families and gamers of all ages are welcome.

Babbacon takes place at the Sefton Hotel, Babbacombe, near Torquay. April 14-16. For more information and bookings contact: Rob Chapman, 7 Baymount, Paignton, Devon TQ3 2LD.

## Tomorrow the world

Lots of news from 3W Inc. (writes our *American Desk*). New games include **Hitler's Last Gamble**, a Battle of the Bulge monster designed by Danny Parker. A spring release date has been set, with a price of about \$40. **Light Division** is a new release from Joe Balkowski and Austin Bay. This is the first in a planned series of games about the 7th Light. The scenario is the 7th Light (representing the Great Satan) vs the Ayatollah, while in the second game the opponent will be Cuba. This has quite a high complexity rating, and the price should come in at around \$35. Ty Bomba, the new editor of *Strategy and Tactics*, has a new game out too: **Tomorrow the World** covers the final showdown between Germany and Japan after they win WW2. Expected price is \$35. Also expected in January is **Modern Naval Battles**, a card game in the **Naval War** vein, with a selling price of \$18.

3W is also taking the plunge into the sports and computer games markets. These will include the ASG series, designed by Jerry Klug and George Gurney. ASG Baseball, the boardgame will sell for \$35.

If that's not enough, 3W are to launch two new magazines; *Sports Gamer*, and *Computer Gamer*, bringing the total of their gaming publications to six.

## News from the Big Apple

The New York Games Fair, scheduled for last October and then cancelled, is now going to be held May 11-13 at Madison Square in New York City. This will be an Essen type event where the emphasis will be on the consumer who will be able to try the products on display. For more info contact: CCE Ltd, 122 E 42nd St. Suite 1121, New York, NY 10168.



# WARGAMES

## GAME

### OF THE MONTH

#### WEST OF ALAMEIN

DESIGNED BY  
BOB McNAMARA

PUBLISHED BY  
AVALON HILL

PRICE £39.95

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**Advanced Squad Leader** is complex and expensive in time and money, yet despite these obstacles it is very popular. Why? A brief examination of the latest ASL product, **West of Alamein**, should assist.

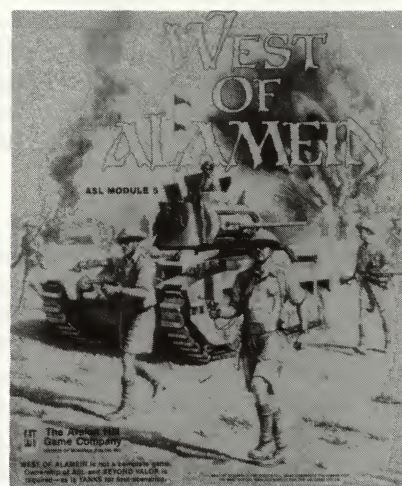
Peeking inside the large box, it soon becomes clear that this is no lightweight system. Although **West of Alamein** is a module (not a complete game) it is bursting at the seams. First one unfolds five 8" x 22" geomorphic mounted mapboards. Four of these are almost featureless desert and the fifth is dominated by a large and impressive ridge feature that many cardboard warriors will be doomed to die fighting

over. The maps are exquisite. The terrain is bolstered by seven do-it-yourself cut-out sheets of overlays. Suddenly that featureless desert can be transformed into something a little more exotic. The overlays are equally well done on good quality card.

Then the counters come out to be reviewed: six lovely sheets of them. The British Army is represented in style with a complete array of personnel, vehicles and equipment. The personnel include leader counters wherein some of the design staff appear to have alter egos (for example McNamara and Mishcon), although my favourites are the hapless 6+1 colonels Poulter, Vasey and Walker! The equipment includes machine guns, anti-tank rifles, mortars and bazookas. These counters are all neatly printed on half-inch counters of which I calculate 520 are provided. The box says 560, but I think it's a misprint.

The tanks and other heavy stuff are on 5/8" counters. These include the less popular (in gaming terms) armoured cars such as the Rolls Royce and Marmon Herrington, as well as the better known Churchills, Comets, Crusaders and Shermans. The equipment is enhanced by the two pounder doorknocker and the six, seventeen and twenty-five pounders with Bofors, Howitzers and other artillery pieces. Also included are some of the specialist markers required for the desert scenarios: vehicle dust, heat haze, sun blindness, hillock summits, dunes and so forth.

All the counters in the review copy were laminated and back printed with not a single example of the printer getting the registration even slightly out. In short, the counters are beautiful. Of course, most gamers aren't buying the game for the pretty counters; the rules and the scenarios are their meat and potatoes. Caviare and truffles would be more appropriate in this context. The ASL rules come in a three ringed binder. The



**West of Alamein** rules provide chapter F on North Africa, ready punched for your rulebook. The production standards match the original game with full colour throughout, plenty of examples and thoughtful designer's notes to spread a little understanding of what's going on.

Chapter F makes it plain that this module is no formula rip-off. There has been a lot of work put into the package to make sure that it is North Africa one is fighting over, not another amorphous piece of cardboard wasteland. This is achieved by detailed terrain rules that recreate, at least in part, the true desert environment.

The terrain introduced includes desert open ground, scrub, hammada (broken terrain), deirs (dip), wadis, hillocks, sand, sangar (similar to foxholes), cactus, olive grove and vineyard. With the addition of the rules for weather and other features of the desert environment the background is complete.

Eight scenarios are provided on two sides of four A4 cards. These begin with the November 1941 action near Gabr Saleh; 12 Stuart tanks from the Fifth Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment taking on mixed Panzer IIs, IIIs and IVs from Kampfgruppe Stephan. The other scenarios become a bit more ambitious



in terms of forces used. Next up is an all infantry clash at Leros that pits elite Fallschirmjaegers against Royal Irish Fusiliers and a Long Range Desert Group patrol. There's a Tobruk action with mixed infantry and armour on both sides, a breakout by the British from Derna in April 1941, a defensive action at Mersa El Brega when Rommel overturned the previous Allied tide and showed his fighting calibre, another defence by the Brits at Tunisia in '43 (Fort McGregor), a counterattack by the Germans from the Mareth Line in '43 and, finally, the redoubtable Kiwis feature in a snapshot look at the struggles around Sidi Rezegh in November '41.

ASL scenarios are no easy option. Experienced players will tell you that most of the hidden secrets of how to play each scenario well only come with repeated and careful play. In other words few of the scenarios are the same each time they are played. Simply by pottering around with the scenarios I came to respect the designers for being able to present us with such challenging options. Doubtless there will be a learned scholar, somewhere, who points out that this scenario (or another) is pro-British or pro-German. Ignore him. Round the corner will be another 'expert' who will have exactly the opposite view! The scenarios are there to be played and enjoyed. **West of Alamein** provides ample opportunity for you to test the theory.

How does it play? That's a question better directed towards a full review of the system, which is beyond the scope of this review. In summary, however, ASL is a massive undertaking. In its basic form the rules are long, detailed and provide for many eventualities. When the designers say it should all make sense and be straightforward they are nearly correct; there is a learning curve in taking in the huge quantity of rules. Once you've done that it does make sense; once the rules become familiar the system does work, and yet many of the rules will never be needed. The vast majority of games pass without those unusual occurrences. When they do happen, the superb rules organisation easily supplies the answer. ASL is big, but it's big on gaming value, too.

Lastly a quick word about the extras: included are the detailed notes on British equipment and vehicles to slot in with the other nations' previously provided. Historical data is kept to a modest amount, but it undoubtedly helps in picturing the scene to know those little snippets about the tools of war. Also included are all the availability charts for the DIY scenarios that die-hard fans will lap up. A card chapter divider is also included with the relevant **West of Alamein** tables.

Criticising a product like this is near to impossible; it's aimed at a captive audience who enjoy the system. The British fans of ASL will lap this up

despite two bones of contention. First, the price. This game retails at almost £40 which compares poorly with the dollar price. It's strange how currency fluctuations rarely benefit the humble game buyer. For the avoidance of doubt, despite the price, the module is many hours of good gaming. It's just that our American cousins appear to enjoy things much more economically.

Secondly, the package, while containing what looks like a complete 1939-1945 British order of battle, only provides desert scenarios. Into the bargain, four of the scenarios require maps from **Yanks** which is an unnecessary expense for gamers who don't particularly want the **Yanks** set. At least you can buy the maps separately. Presumably Normandy, Italian Front and other non-desert scenarios will be forthcoming; it would have been nice to see at least one such scenario provided. Fortunately, judging by the rumour mill, scenarios are likely to feature in Avalon Hill's *General* magazine – or even a special ASL only magazine which was suggested some time back.

And that is **West of Alamein**. For fans of the system, a must. For those who have yet to savour ASL I can only recommend that you try a few games out with someone who has reasonable expertise with the system. I think you'll enjoy it.

*Ellis Simpson*

## GULF STRIKE

DESIGNED BY  
MARK HERMAN

PUBLISHED BY  
VICTORY GAMES

PRICE £29.95

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In 1983, the fledgeling Victory Games, survivors from the demise of SPI, announced the release of **Gulf Strike**, an operational level game on contemporary conflict in the Middle East Gulf area. The controversial topic was in keeping with the reputation of

the designer, Mark Herman, one of the gurus of modern gaming. For Herman, the more controversial the topic, the greater his interest.

Fortunately Herman's design talents are considerable. Despite any indication to the contrary suggested elsewhere, **Gulf Strike** is not a complex monster. It is big and it is not the most playable game that you will encounter – but it is more manageable and more fun than many games a quarter of its size.

In late 1983 I was fortunate enough to meet Herman and be spared some of his time to explain his philosophy on design. He was keen to emphasise that he saw games moving away from the traditional game turn sequence: 'I move, I fight, you move, you fight.' He disliked the phenomenon whereby the enemy conveniently sits still as you launch your wonderfully orchestrated

set piece assault – and then you wait while the enemy attempts to do the same in reverse! Accordingly, it should come as no surprise that **Gulf Strike** avoids that difficulty.

### INITIATIVE

Throughout each turn (representing two days) there are three Action Stages. One player is the Initiative player and the other the Reaction player. Initiative can change from turn to turn dependent on casualties incurred.

In the first two action stages the Initiative player has the opportunity to carry out whatever operations he wants while his opponent can react; in the third action stage the roles are reversed. It is important to emphasise that while your opponent is on the attack your forces don't sit still; they are given



ample opportunity to throw a spanner in the works by reacting to each and every threat.

The central focus is detection. Ground units are automatically detected but air and naval units start undetected and must be spotted by the enemy. The game tables provide ratings for every unit's ability to spot – one is immediately imbued with a new sense of respect for the United States' AWACS early warning aircraft! As each naval or air unit moves across the map the opponent can attempt to detect it. He needs to detect the unit in order to intercept it and enter combat. Therefore both sides have to keep their eyes peeled throughout the game. You cannot hibernate off to the loo while the Soviets merrily conduct their movement – not if you want to win, that is!

All of this movement takes place on either the strategic map or the operational map. The strategic map gives a 280 kilometre per hex overview of the Gulf – from Madagascar in the south to the Soviet Afghan border in the north; from Egypt in the west to the Bay of Bengal past Sri Lanka in the east. What the strategic map does is remove the 'end of the world' syndrome whereby units arrive on the battlefield from the same predetermined map edge. Here, units can manoeuvre around the map and enter the main combat zone virtually at will. The centre of the map then portrays the operational hexes which the units move onto at the scale of 28 kilometres per hex. It sounds more difficult than it is in practice.

The action stages are pretty freeform so that you may begin with an air unit, move onto a naval unit and then another air unit. Ground movement is distinct because otherwise it is difficult to keep track of which of these units have been moved.

### US CHAUVINISM

The game focuses strongly on modes. Each air unit must be given either an intercept or an offensive mode. Part of the skill is in balancing this out so that you have enough flights available of both types. There is little point in putting every F-16 on intercept if you want to conduct offensive missions! The air rules allow a certain element of US chauvinism to intrude to reflect the

designer's belief that the good guys will be able to 'out-sortie' the opposition.

The missions that air units can carry out include bombardment against ground and naval units, or intercepting enemy flights, or naval units, ferrying troops or aircraft, interdicting ground hexes and so forth. A typical exchange might consist of the US player launching a flight from a carrier and moving the stack across the map threatening to attack (perhaps) an already detected Soviet ship unit. The Soviet player will want to detect that flight and then launch his interceptors to battle it out in the skies. Thus we are shown combat as a function of movement. To protect striking aircraft the US player might have included one or more escort unit(s) and he in turn will try to detect the interceptors so that he's not at a disadvantage in the ensuing battle.

### DOUBLE BLUFF?

The interested reader will have twigged that this interaction gives plenty of opportunity for thrust, counter thrust and feint. For example, is that flight going to attack my precious beachhead or it is after my support ships? How many of these three aircraft (the maximum flight) are on anti-air missions? Is my opponent trying to sucker me into using valuable units up now and should I ignore this attack – or is it a double bluff? Are my airbases protected? What in hell is he up to?

Thus there is instant portrayal of command control and the fog of war on

a limited but very successful level. Keep some aspirin by the board if you put a lot of effort into your games because **Gulf Strike** can give you plenty of headaches.

Naval units and combat use much the same procedure – although obviously they move less quickly and are less subject to modes; they start each turn as in port or under way. Since being in port makes ships detected (and once detected a ship is always detected) this is a risky operation if there's insufficient air cover around.

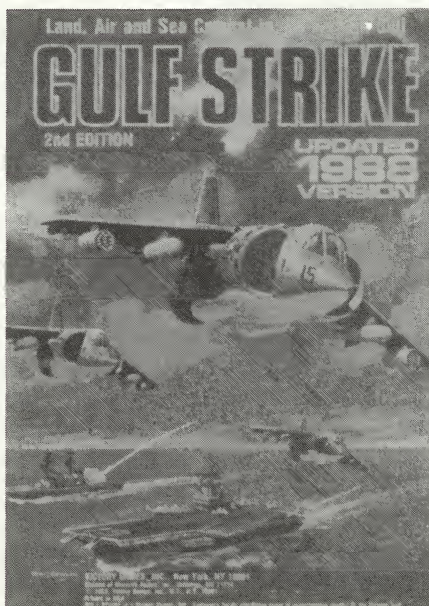
### NUTS AND BOLTS

Naval and air units have a silhouette and movement allowance on the front; on the back they are rated for their abilities in bombardment, anti-air, anti-ship missile, electronic counter measures (ECM), sub/surface combat and the number of hits they can take.

Although the information is extensive it is smoothly integrated into combat. A ten-sided die is rolled against the appropriate attack strength. A roll of less than or equal to that value gives a varying number of hits, the lower the better. The victim uses his ECM number as a defence strength and rolls against that value. He can reduce the number of hits (including negating them all) by rolling equal to or less than the ECM value; again, the lower the roll the better the result. Combat is swift; you will spend more time deciding what to do and when to do it than you will in totting up combat factors.

### THE FRONT LINE

Ground units are dealt with in a more conventional fashion with an odds-based combat results table. However, Herman has ensured that the ground game is demanding too. Ground units are assigned as either front line or reserve, which determines exactly when throughout the action stages they may move. They are also committed to one of several formations such as hasty assault, deliberate assault, hasty defence, deliberate defence, travel, reconstitution and the default formation of moving to contact. Each of these formations has an effect on combat and movement. Travel is for covering distances without combat. Deliberate defence is a dig-in last stand.





The juggling of offensive and defensive formations is demanding; troops can change formation but it costs movement points and there are never enough fast units in the right place at the right time. Ground units (division level and lower are provided) will also have to contend with troop quality, chemical warfare, artillery support, ground attack aircraft support and supply. The terrain charts deal with extensive zones of control differences and formation restrictions.

### SUPPLY DEMANDS

Just when you thought it was safe to finish the rules, out comes the bane of many a game: supply. In **Gulf Strike** the supply rules, you will be pleased to know, are not difficult. Careful attention, however, has to be paid to wasting supply on unnecessary combat: yet another problem for the gamer to take account of.

Clearly this can only be an overview of the system. This version of the game, the

1988 update, includes six scenarios which range from the introductory to the obsessive (yes you can fight the Iran-Iraq war. Like the real thing it is much of a stalemate).

The playing times are almost certainly understated as the rules of **Gulf Strike** take time to master, particularly in the early days of your experience with this ground breaking design. The Horn of Africa introductory scenario is well worth repeated play to save much embarrassment and wasted time when it comes to the fully fledged version.

Physically the package is excellently put together; four maps (two small and two standard 3x2 feet size) of exquisite and clear artwork, four sheets of counters that are well die cut and up to the usual standards (although there are probably too few markers), a 60 page rulebook, a book of tables and an update booklet of 16 pages with order of battle information and minor errata. The rules need to be read with careful reference to the excellent (and numerous)

examples. Moderately experienced gamers will find the complexities easily within their reach.

There are games that were made to be played once and put away and there are games like **Gulf Strike** which were made to be played often and at length. I wish I could devote many more hours to delights such as this. It is doubtful who can play the bigger scenarios more than two or three times a year, but that will probably heighten the pleasure. As for play balance, that must remain an unknown. It looks acceptable; certainly if you want to rack up wins try another game. **Gulf Strike** is for gamers who want to play, to learn and enjoy. Winning is not everything.

Remember at the moment the Iran-Iraq war is 'resolved'. Who knows what will happen next year? With **Gulf Strike** you have the opportunity to examine the possibilities and answer the question.

*Ellis Simpson*

## WAR OF 1812

DESIGNED BY  
CRAIG BESNIQUE

PUBLISHED BY  
COLUMBIA GAMES

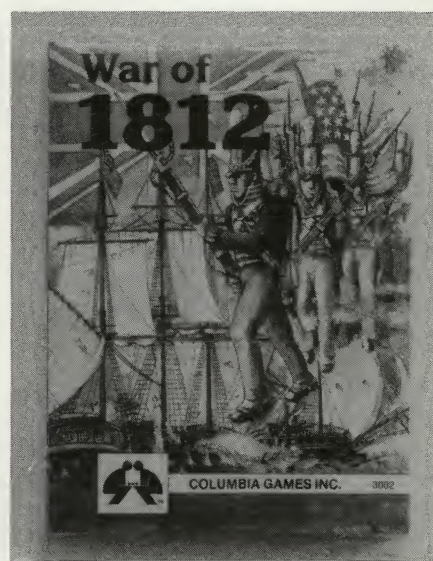
PRICE £19.95

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This game covers the little known war between the British and the Americans in Canada and the Northern US which ran as a small, but important, sideshow to the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. The game is simple, quick and easy to learn and offers plenty of scope for strategy, especially for experienced players. While **War of 1812** is not a recent release, it is reviewed here as it uses the 'block system' which will appear, slightly modified, in Columbia's upcoming **East Front** game. It is hoped that this review will also act as a preview to that long awaited game.

The idea of using standing wooden blocks is not new, having been used before in both **Admirals** and **Gamma Two/Avalon Hill's Napoleon** amongst others. The system has some advantages, mainly that your opponent has no idea of the composition or strength of your forces – a clever system of hidden movement. The drawback is the cost, for the wooden blocks with markings are substantially dearer than counters. This normally results in a low unit density – no bad thing.

The game comes in a posh slipcase box containing a thick cardstock map, dice, rulebook and approximately forty wooden blocks in black and red. All the components are appealing, the rules are extremely clear and cover only a few pages, and the blocks are well made from hardwood. The map is quite unusual, being an attractive hand drawn colour map onto which red lines are imprinted to designate the movement routes. The features in play on the map are villages, towns, important cities and the lakes. Units can move along just one route per turn but as the map is compact, it doesn't take too long to get about in the space of the ten turn campaign year. There are three years representing 1812, 1813 and 1814 and units have to position themselves to



'winter' between each of the sets of ten moves.

The strategic situation is simple. The British are in Canada looking to move south to capture cities and the Americans are deployed to stop them and counterattack. Partially blocking the route between the antagonists are two of the great lakes, which means naval forces play an important part. Each town and city has a victory point value and the capture of enemy towns and naval control of the lakes is the aim



of the game. Play balance is even and the game tends towards equilibrium, which always gives an exciting game as objectives and the upper hand constantly change hands.

The units are armies and navies. Each army has a current strength between one and four which is designated by the uppermost edge – as casualties are taken, the block is simply rotated. The British player draws ten army counters at random from those available; the American player draws twelve. The armies have initial strength points between two and four so this can make a small difference to your chances of winning. Each player is allocated three fleets and the British can also activate a strong Indian unit if they capture Detroit at any point in the game.

Deployment is straightforward as the rules dictate that units must cover every friendly town worth two or more victory points. This means the forces are spread out along the front with little opportunity to combine early on. There are two or three major cities on each side worth four or five points that quickly become key targets and the big armies tend to defend or attack around the approaches to these areas.

Combat, like movement is simple. Units move into contact, add up their total strength points and throw that many dice. Each six rolled kills one of the enemy points and each side has the option to retire or continue. That's about it. Naval combat is slightly more complex in that there is an 'unoperational' stage between full strength and eliminated and amphibious assaults are subject to an unopposed first round of fire but that's all. I must say it makes a change to get back to basics like this and the battles are great fun when rolling large numbers of dice unless you are as unlucky as me. As the result of combat, towns or lakes change hands and the victory point total is adjusted up or down. If one player achieves a ten point advantage then he wins, otherwise the game progresses for the full three years with reinforcements appearing each winter.

The game system gives rise to fluid play and the nice thing about it is that nothing you decide to do takes very long. Great strategic plans come to fruition in the space of three or four quick moves, the whole emphasis of the attack can be changed quickly simply by leaving a covering force, and using the

naval movement it is possible to make raids behind the enemy lines. The only factor that slows the game slightly is the requirement to garrison enemy towns. This means leaving a trail of units on your way to, say, Quebec if you want to retain the victory points won in taking them. The game takes between an hour and two hours depending on when one side collapses. Overall this is a game that will appeal as a basic game for the beginner or as a quick, light hearted time-filler for the more hardened boardgamer. That is not to say you won't have a good, challenging game – **War of 1812** is what you make of it and it offers much in the way of strategy without the usual pages of rules and complex systems. To be honest, I was pleasantly surprised by the game. I had seen it on shelves and seeing it was a block system game, didn't give it a second thought but I now see I missed out. It is certainly a characteristic of the smaller companies that they do not get the exposure and hype that some of their better games deserve. This is a fine game offering excellent value for money and if the East Front successor is as good or better it will be very interesting indeed.

*Mike Siggins*

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## TEAM YANKEE

DESIGNED BY  
**FRANK CHADWICK &  
MARC MILLER**

PUBLISHED BY  
**GDW**

PRICE **£17.95**



From the normally impressive GDW design team comes this rather less than impressive WW3 game of tactical combat. The title refers to a book by Harold Coyle and the scenarios in the game are based upon its contents.

The box contains two half-sized (though double-sided) glossy card maps, counters, and a rulebook. Each hex is 200 metres across, each unit an armoured fighting vehicle, infantry weapons team, or an aircraft/helicopter squad.

In this **Panzerblitz** based system, units have attack and defence strengths. The attack strength is compared with the defence strength to produce an odds column on the combat results table which will produce the following results: destroyed, pinned (infantry only), damaged (vehicles only), or no effect.

The attack strength is modified for range, the defence strength by terrain. For example, a US M1 is firing at a distance of 5 hexes (1000m), at a T-72. The M1 has an attack strength of 8 and range of 10. At 5 hexes the attack strength is doubled to 16. The T-72 in the open has a defence strength of 6. This produces odds of approximately 2-1. In these circumstances a roll of 1-3 is a kill, a 4 means the T-72 is damaged, a 5 or 6 signifies a miss. Unfortunately rules on range modifications and the chart disagree (I followed the chart).

The turn sequence into which this simple 'kill or cure' fits is: first player attacks, moves, then makes a final attack. The second player then takes his turn following the same sequence. Some units cannot move and fire, others

can, but essentially the first part of a turn is about forcing the enemy to keep his head down. Movement is to close the gap and avoid the reacting enemy. Final attacks allow any friendly unit to weigh in with its contribution to death and destruction.

The movement rules are simple but the reaction rule is a tad unclear. I assume units can start a scenario ready to react but there is no clear instruction on this.

The line of fire rule is one of the shortest I've ever seen. Indeed, only 5 pages of rules, including the scenario instructions, are needed to get going. It is therefore useful as a game for novices and is openly marketed as a 'First Battle' series game.

### SCENARIOS

The first scenario involves the Soviets attempting to clear a village. Reservations appeared after our first effort; the Soviets got cuffed and a succession of 1s rolled by the US meant that it was over on turn one (out of 8).

Persevere. We moved on to the second scenario which involves a couple of extra pages of rules covering morale. However, another bloodbath ensued. This time wave after wave of US units marched up to the Soviets and simply waited for them to roll 6's. Very quickly, it was hey-ho it's off to Moscow we go for the guys in green.

Persevere? Scenario three adds limited visibility, scattered mines, and the scenario notes, all of which adds up to no more than a page. But when we saw that the encounter was between 18 infantry, 31 T-72s plus fire support, and

12 US tanks, we decided enough was enough and turned to the telly.

I hesitate to criticise two designers who are far more qualified than me. However, in my humble opinion this game is a turkey.

The main problem is that the combat system simply doesn't work. It is both anarchic and unrealistic. Even using excessive fudge and 'design for effect' excuses, it does not work. The main problem is a game system which combines the chance to hit and the damage capability into one number. On a tactical level it simply will not hold up, either in theory or in practice.

Disappointing then, the more so because everything else is really up to the usual GDW standard. The huge amount of detail which they cram into this novice game is commendable. The production standards would get 10 out of 10 were it not for the errata and the unintentional loose threads in the rules.

The rules are packed with information – even game stats plus silhouettes for counters not included with the game to allow DIY scenarios.

I confess to some bemusement; I admire the talent behind the game and I can see that the design is simple to play and manages to provide an insight into the complexity of the modern battlefield. Why then, do I find the prospect of another game so unappealing?

*Ellis Simpson*

### VIRGIN GAMES CENTRE'S TOP TEN WARGAMES DECEMBER 1988

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1 <b>Desert Falcons</b> (GDW)        | 6 <b>Battletech Reinforcements</b> (FASA) |
| 2 <b>RAF</b> (West End)              | 7 <b>Harpoon 2</b> (GDW)                  |
| 3 <b>Air Superiority</b> (GDW)       | 8 <b>Hunt for Red October</b> (TSR)       |
| 4 <b>Battletech</b> (FASA)           | 9 <b>War &amp; Peace</b> (Avalon Hill)    |
| 5 <b>Imperium Romanum</b> (West End) | 10 <b>West of Alamein</b> (Avalon Hill)   |



# Miniatures Overview

or,  
how much is that insult in the window?

*Ellis Simpson takes a look at the colourful world of tabletop wargaming and comments on some of the most popular rules.*

Begin at the beginning. I began gaming in the dark days of secondary school. A grimy poster advertised the club and I came along to march regiments of Airfix soldiers to and fro on battlefields composed of history books for hills and jotter covers for rivers. The rules were as makeshift as the terrain, but it was fun. Soon, order intruded. The pearls of the Wargames Research Group became required reading. We still had fun. Of course, we had each other to learn the rules from, and it never seemed to matter that we didn't feel like joining the Society of Ancients, or whatever.

Time passes. The economics of miniatures are such that boardgaming becomes more important. Sure, the 25mm Napoleonics and 15mm Ancients are still in the cupboard, but maybe one day, I'll get them out. It doesn't stop me buying the rules, though. All the rules. I like to learn from those who know and some people know more than others. Some people know less.

This brings us up to date, and as a result of recent releases I felt it was worthwhile spending a little time in assessing the current situation.

Wargames Research Games have done a commendable job of maintaining consistent quality and market penetration across most of the miniature gaming periods. Napoleonics, WW2, Modern and, most especially, Ancients players have been

able to call upon a well recognised body of rules for those continuous tournaments and competitions. Therefore let us commence this crusade with WRG and a look at two of their most recent sets.

## ANCIENTS 3000BC to 1485AD (WARGAMES RESEARCH GROUP)

This is the seventh edition (amended November '87) of probably the most famous and popular sets of miniatures rules, written by Phil Barker. There was much heat in the Ancients fraternity when the 'revolutionary' 7th edition arrived. This was mainly due to certain base sizes being changed, but also to the virtual rewrite of the mechanisms. By acknowledging the 'firework display' tendency of the previous sets, Barker attempted to redress the balance. In past editions, as in many tabletop diversions, the armies were able to do so much, so fluently. *C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre.*

Scales, particularly time scales, are always a problem in miniatures. Everywhere one reads there are attempts to explain why reality and the game time scale are so incompatible. Most gamers ignore the problem, but for information's sake, in this set bounds are equivalent to 15 minutes; ground scales are dependent on miniature sizes (6mm/15mm/25mm) and each figure is about 50 men. There are exceptions so that 'E' class, the lowest of the low, represents ten times that number.

These rules give a heavy emphasis to training and morale, an emphasis much mimicked by less talented authors, and an extensive terrain/deployment/battlefield conditions procedure. The sequence of play is quite involved, but

hardened gamers tell me that it is no more involved or complex than an average boardgame. Written orders are used within a preset limit. Thus, troops with a 'rush' order must advance at least half of their number to hand to hand combat. The definitions (limits) are well done and manageable.

Morale, cohesion and fatigue are all catered for. Mastery of these three concepts is essential if a gamer is to achieve success in battle. These sub-systems are not innovative, but they do create a more realistic limit on how much troops can achieve and avoid the 'superunit' syndrome, whereby units scoot about the battlefield with nary a care in the world.

Movement is broken down into march segments (impulse movement) with Light Cavalry moving five times and poor old manhandled artillery moving once. The length of each march segment is determined by troop type.

Combat is simple and similar to previous editions. Weapons have 'factors' which, after adjustment, are cross-referenced with figures fighting to produce casualties. Unusually, figures are generally not removed; the impact of the casualties is fully assessed (morale/cohesion, etc) but the ranks of the unit are assumed to be filled in. It sounds strange, but it works. Whole units are removed upon being routed, or otherwise 'destroyed'.

The notes in this edition are extensive (in comparison to most wargame rules) and include examples of play, sample unit sizes, and tactical hints.

The down side of this is that for the novice or newcomer these rules are a disaster. You cannot pick up the rules and 'enjoy them'. There's no





explanation of what gaming is about (you have to be part of the club) and the examples are simply not extensive enough. Worse, Phil Barker may know about Ancients but he cannot write rules. He cannot clearly and efficiently communicate ideas. The meat is there, but the style is so opaque as to be unfriendly. There is no alphabetical index, nor numerical or other organisation of the paragraphs of rules (in a 50 page tome of closely printed text, this is inexcusable) and too much knowledge is assumed.

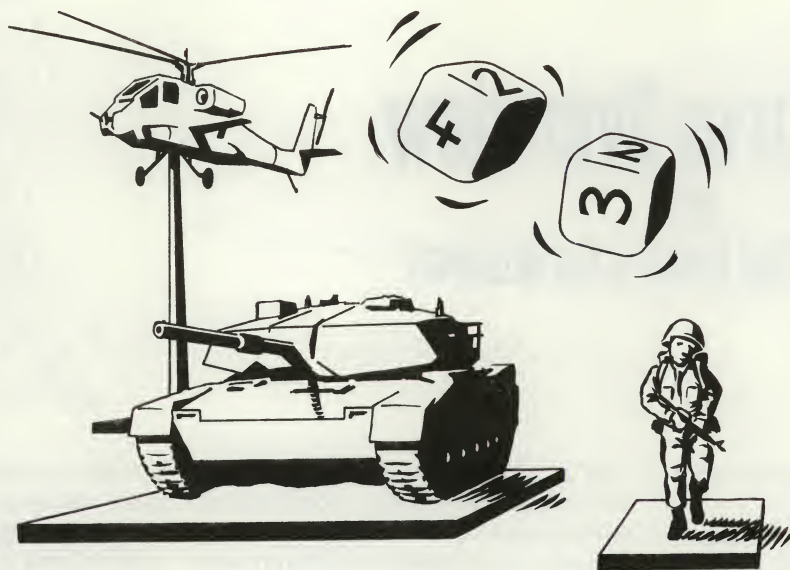
In summary, superb research and depth of knowledge, but poorly composed. Obviously my views are in a minority, as these continue to be popular. I just wish they were written by someone else.

### **WORLD WAR TWO (1925-1950) (WARGAMES RESEARCH GROUP)**

Rules for small arms land warfare from platoon to battalion level written by Phil Barker. Reread the previous section if you want to know about the style, lucidity and user-friendliness of this set; the same applies.

As to the rules themselves, a June '88 update, they are commendably full of equipment data and organisational lists. They use a 1:1 scale with alternate bounds representing about five minutes. Again, there is an extensive terrain/ deployment procedure. This is very useful and cannot be faulted. Orders are defined and the troop types include such lovelies as 'stubborn' (for example, pre-1943 Brits), 'dashing' (eg Highland Scots) and 'thrusting' (eg Waffen SS or Gurkhas).

Movement is pretty standard, but is subject to those orders, and the combat systems have mostly been seen before. Detailed morale rules are replaced by troops being neutralised/pinned/repulsed and so forth according to their troop type. Extensive sub-systems are provided for add-ons of air support, engineering etc.



These rules have not been out long enough to be fully assessed, but I am sure they will have their followers. For my part, while I do not doubt the research, the 'hard' data and the honest intent, the playability looks awful. Both WRG sets could do with someone to remove Barker's worst excesses and to present the material in a more readable, digestible and retrievable format. I am a hardened gamer who would not balk at *any* boardgaming monster. These rules are inexcusably poorly written. It's a shame, because the research is second to none, the ideas interesting and the depth of options impressive. Basically, it's all let down in the presentation and lack of 'development' in the boardgaming sense.

### **FIREFIGHT, CHALLENGER, CORPS COMMANDER (TABLETOP)**

I have stuck these together for speed of comment. They cover, respectively, modern skirmish level combat (a section per side), modern battle group combat (from a platoon per side, upwards) and the full works of modern combat allowing true divisional level encounters. All are written by one Bruce Rea-Taylor.

**Firefight** looks like a lift of the Avalon Hill game, **Firepower**. Forget this set and buy the game.

**Challenger** was a direct challenge to oust the WRG rules for post-WW2 warfare. I gather they have succeeded. The rules are chock full of data and

appear to offer the gamer everything he could wish for in the way of options: aircraft, engineering, electronic warfare, night fighting, aircraft and helicopters. Some cut-out counters are also provided. I cannot believe, using a 1:1 scale, that these are a smooth playing set, but I am prepared to be convinced. Every game I have seen using them has been (inevitably) interrupted by at least one rules conference for the players to sort out some sticky problem. Not that the rules are incomplete, simply that there is too much to cover.

**Corps Commander** is an attempt to use boardgaming techniques on the tabletop; units have strength points representing tanks/sections and the basic unit is the platoon. The scale is intended to allow massive battles and the supplement **By Air & Sea** completes the requirements of even the hardest enthusiast. Extensive data and organisational lists are provided and make this quite a unique set. Of the three, this is the most interesting.

Unfortunately for Tabletop (and Mr Rea-Taylor) these rules are not without fault. They are decorated with illustrations belonging to the school of drawing by numbers. The grammar is worse. Time after time, two or more sentences run into one another without so much as a full stop. Perhaps the typewriter only has a limited number of capital letters or full stops? The proof-reading is poor, although typos have not yet reached the legendary heights of FGU of New York. There are examples of play and a numerical organisation – but no alphabetic index – in each of the sets.

Tabletop Games may not be big, but the amateur state of these rules is never going to do for the company or the hobby what a properly produced set would do. Phil Barker cannot communicate and needs an editor/developer, but Bruce Rea-Taylor needs English lessons and a word processor with a dictionary.



## TWO HUNDRED YEARS 5mm rules for 1700–1900) (TABLETOP)

To be fair to Mr Rea-Taylor and Tabletop, I thought I'd invest a few quid in seeing if R P Butler could produce the goods. Unfortunately Mr Butler must either be closely related to Mr Rea-Taylor or to the proprietor of Tabletop Games. This set is also cursed with juvenile illustrations (without which at least the text would not have to try so hard) and an abundance of grammatical, typographical and punctuation errors. I counted nine goofs in the introduction alone.

I am afraid that these rules will be low down on any successful attempt to get me back into miniatures. They are, quite simply, dreadfully written. Candidly, I couldn't be bothered to find out if they work.

All of the foregoing is pathetic when one considers the healthy state of the UK miniatures hobby: glossy mags, clubs, well attended conventions – and plenty of them. Comfortable in their home environment I fear that the establishment is about to be shaken to the core. *Be warned, the yanks are coming!*

## HARPOON, JOHNNY REB, COMMAND DECISION, COMBINED ARMS (GDW)

**Harpoon** is a modern naval miniatures set of rules with everything in the box to start you off; scenarios and counters as well as the rules. **Harpoon** has its flaws – look out for a forthcoming new edition – but it is the best attempt at tackling a very difficult job.

**Johnny Reb** is the old Adventure Games miniature rules for the American Civil War from the **Squad Leader** man, John Hill. In the GDW package (boxed) come the rules, a scenario booklet, die-cut markers, *four* copies of a beginners' guide, *four* sets of tables, a couple of cut-out battle gauges for calculating fields of fire and four dice.

The rules are exquisitely produced and easy to read. The graphic standards are unbeatable. The rules are fully numbered and alphabetically indexed. Tables required are printed in the rules

and in those separate booklets. There are countless examples of play and notes on what the game is about. The mechanics are clear, easy to remember and accurate. The beginner could pick this up and enjoy the read, never mind enjoy the playing. The beginners' sets are a wonderful idea, allowing novices instant command and access to the fun. The scenarios are beautifully presented, providing hours of pleasure before the players will need to research for themselves.

In short, a magnificent set of rules which should kill off all homegrown efforts in this era (ie Newbury, Tabletop etc) and rightly so.

**Command Decision** is a WW2 set, also boxed, written by Frank Chadwick. He has set out to avoid the errors of using a 1:1 scale (committed by himself in the past, too) by using a 1:5 scale for vehicles and one stand equalling a platoon. The end result is a hyperactive game that works at a cracking pace. Every gamer I have spoken to who has tried these rules, raves about them. In little time you can be playing turns of 15 minutes in the same amount of real time. This is a stunning achievement.

Forget the fact that reading the rules (complete with superb notes on the design) made me want to play them, and take note of their proven playability. The graphic standards, again, are terrific, with great illustrations (photographs!) and clear text. You are provided with a rules booklet (including the fringe areas of night fighting, engineering, aircraft, paras etc), a data booklet, an organisational booklet (very extensive), die-cut markers (for the unique orders system in use), summary cards for easy reference and a four page rules summary for refreshing your knowledge between other games.

The rules are not alphabetically indexed or numerically referenced. However, it is a tribute to Chadwick's uncluttered style that everything is where you expect it to be: rules queries have speedily been resolved. The errata sheet is unfortunate, but relates in only the minutest detail to the rules – it's more on organisation and the campaign. Oh yes, I knew I forgot something, they give you a campaign game to start off with! Highly recommended. It will be interesting to see how the field copes with this trend-breaking blockbuster.

Lastly, **Combined Arms** is the modern development of **Command Decision**, using identical mechanics and very reasonably released as a glossy book in flimsy covers. I suspect this was because most purchasers of the first set would buy the second, obviating the need for the die-cut markers. If not, you're on a do-it-yourself programme. GDW do at least provide the blanks to photocopy onto card.

The set is produced to the same high standards as its predecessor. In the one volume are the rules, data, organisations (including beyond the expected regulars, the Turks, Greeks, Italians and Danish) and a campaign game. Once again, reading the rules makes you want to play and that is no mean achievement. Magnificent.

So, there you have it. The Yanks are coming into miniature gaming. If GDW keep up these standards they will be unbeatable. I doubt the UK industry has the brains or brawn to respond to the challenge; perhaps they will be happy with their reverse snobbery, poorly written and produced rules? I won't, and I suggest that you should not, either.

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# role-playing games

## ARS MAGICA

DESIGNED BY  
JONATHAN TWEET &  
MARK REIN-HAGEN

PUBLISHED BY  
LION RAMPANT

PRICE £14

\*\*\*\*

There are those who think that the time is passed when a couple of enthusiastic rolegamers can come up with a neat game, get it published, and expect success. I am not one of them. If there is one rolegame that deserves to sell bucketloads in 1989, this is it.

**Ars Magica** is a rolegame about the medieval period. But what sets it apart from the host of pseudo-medieval games that gushed forth in the aftermath of **Original Dungeons & Dragons** is that it portrays a medieval world seen through medieval eyes. In other words, it *feels* right. No 'Ecology of the Goblin' nonsense here.

As the title suggests, the game focuses on the sorcerers of the period, the *Magi* of the Order of Hermes. The player characters (the *troupe* as they are collectively referred to in this game) are members of a covenant – an organisation of magi who have band together for survival and mutual aid. Each player has a number of characters: a magus, a companion (a non-magical 'hero' type employed by the covenant) and grogs (mundane bodyguard types noted for their high mortality rate). In an adventure a player will normally play one of their possible characters, depending on the circumstances. The grogs are a neat touch: each covenant has a pool of grogs which are held in common among players. So players can

take turns characterising a particular grog, or may have their own favourites.

In addition to this idea of a portfolio of player characters, **Ars Magica** features another unusual suggestion: namely that the players should take turns to be the *storyguide* (ie the referee). Combined with a suggestion that players be allowed a constructive voice in the development of a story, this leads to a rolegame that truly encourages joint creativity.

Enough theoretical nonsense: what's the game like? The 160 page rulebook is attractively laid out, with adequate illustrations (mostly medieval woodcuts). It is structured in a fairly traditional manner: character creation, abilities, combat, magic, background. Each chapter opens with an atmospheric little tale that illustrates the subject covered. The tales follow the early career of the magus Lucienne and her master Grimgroth, and they convey the game's flavour well.

Many modern games are based around a single mechanic – a core rule that can be applied to any eventuality in the game. I am one of those rolegamers who feels that this is altogether a good thing, and I apply it to the games I design. I was therefore encouraged to see that **Ars Magica** features such a system. Players roll a single ten-sided die, add or subtract any modifiers arising from characteristics, abilities or circumstances, and hope that they equal or exceed the *ease factor* which the storyguide has specified for the task. This simple mechanic is complicated by there being four ways of reading the die (depending whether 0 counts as zero or ten, and whether a roll of 1 results in a subsequent roll being doubled). To my mind this is an unnecessary

complication, but I guess it would be quite easy to get used to.

The main innovation in the character creation process is that characteristics are represented as bonuses rather than as numbers on a scale. Thus, an average person is rated zero in all their attributes. Players roll for the eight characteristics as four related pairs – rolling one positive ten-sided die and one negative to generate the net value to be split between the statistics. Since the two characteristics in a pair are related, their scores mustn't deviate from each other by more than two points. There's a bit of fudging to ensure that all characters have at least one passable stat, but otherwise that's it. A nice touch is that players must choose a description for those characteristics that deviate from zero – this shows in what way the character is exceptional in the area. For example, an individual with +3 Strength may manifest this in





the form of broad shoulders, bulging biceps or powerful stride, to name but three possibilities.

Players then go on to develop their characters further. Companions may select a number of exceptional attributes from the list given. These resemble the advantages and disadvantages of *Champions*, and must balance each other unless the total of the character's characteristics is negative, in which case they get that many free points. This system adds much background and depth to characters, but I can't help feeling that it should be used sparingly. The temptation to build a blind, lame, midget lycanthrope with sex appeal might be too strong for some players! Magi get to do a similar sort of thing with a smaller selection of magical attributes.

Characters are rounded off with a set of personality traits almost identical to those in *Pendragon*. The justification given is that a system of traits enables players to have their characters do apparently 'out of character' things without being criticised by the other players. This rings rather hollow to me.

The list of abilities given is adequate, and they are divided into talents, skills and knowledge: pointing out the real differences in the way people acquire ability. There is also a system of 'clusters' which link related skills. Nothing too complex, but it works fine.

Combat, for me, was the weakest part of the game. In a game which stresses story over mechanics it was disappointing to find a combat system with a very 'wargamey' feel. Too many die rolls and too much arithmetic make this an area that needs some attention. Having said that, the system covers most combat eventualities adequately, and if you prefer your melees highly structured then you won't find it much worse than any other fantasy combat system.

The centrepiece of the game is the magic system. Ten years ago I was wowed by *Chivalry & Sorcery* because of the extraordinary depth and complexity of the magic rules. I can see this game having a similar effect on gamers nowadays – not because it's especially complex, but because of its atmosphere. Magic is organised into Forms and Techniques, and Latin is used for these. A simple device, you

might think, but somehow there's far more appeal in performing a *Perdo Ignem* enchantment, than casting a destroy fire spell. The feel is backed up by the names of the spells themselves. A few examples will give you an idea: 'Blade of the Virulent Flame', 'Gather the Essence of the Beast', 'Confusion of the Insane Vibrations'. As a fan of *Empire of the Petal Throne* (which features such delights as 'The Bolt of Imminent Immolation') I was well pleased with the spell names of *Ars Magica*.

This is not *just* a spell system, however. Spells are simply the formalised way of doing things. A mage who is confident may make up a spell on the spur of the moment. The rules are flexible enough that such freeform improvisation can be handled with ease.

The game also has the distinction of featuring a workable set of magical duelling rules. The *Certamen* is designed to simulate magical conflict ranging from the dramatic pyrotechnics of the movies to more subtle struggles of will. To work well it requires players to have good imaginations, to be prepared to describe what they are doing. It is to the credit of the rules that such embellishments will never jar with the system, as they sometimes do with more venerable rolegames.

And so to the nether regions of the game. Medieval society is covered without the tables and tedium of *Chivalry & Sorcery*. Stations in society are described clearly, but with enough detail to give you a complete picture of the culture portrayed. The Bestiary then lists a sample selection of animals



## VIRGIN GAMES CENTRE'S TOP TEN ROLEGAMES DECEMBER 1988

- 1 **Basic D&D** (TSR)
- 2 **Battle for the Golden Sun**  
(Star Wars, West End)
- 3 **2300 Equipment Guide** (GDW)
- 4 **MERP boxed** (ICE)
- 5 **Star Wars RPG** (West End)
- 6 **FR 6** (AD&D, TSR)
- 7 **Players' Handbook**  
(AD&D, TSR)
- 8 **Tatooine Manhunt**  
(Star Wars, West End)
- 9 **Forgotten Realms City System**  
(AD&D, TSR)
- 10 **Star Wars Sourcebook**  
(West End)

and monsters. Instead of dealing with monsters as a set of species existing in a biological and social eco-system, the *Ars Magica* approach is to get into the medieval mindset. Monsters are monsters, and they tend each to have their own quirks and abilities. The realm of faerie is not just an 'alternate universe' populated by an alien race: it is a place of myth and power, filled by people who manifest some of the more extreme aspects of human behaviour.

*Ars Magica* rounds off with a brief guide to playing and running the game, followed by a short scenario, an excursion into faerie that should serve as a good introduction to the game.

If you collect rolegames for good ideas, then you'll find rich pickings in this one. If you're looking for a new game to take you away from mechanics and 20th Century rationalisations, back into the lands of mystery and enchantment, then this is it. In either case you won't regret your purchase.

Paul Mason

*Ars Magica* can be obtained by sending £14 plus £1.70 p&p to Lion Rampant UK, Spike's Games, PO Box 37, Leeman Road, York YO1 1UG.



## RUNEQUEST CITIES

DESIGNED BY  
STEVEN ABRAMS, JON  
EVERSON & THE  
MIDKEMIA PRESS

PUBLISHED BY  
AVALON HILL

PRICE £7.95

\*\*\*<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

This 64-page book has the subtitle 'Create and explore your own fantasy communities'. This is the fourth edition of this material, but the first to be geared to the RuneQuest system, and I can't help but feel that its non-RuneQuest origins are a little too obvious for comfort. It consists almost entirely of random encounter tables –

always a dangerous thing to give to inexperienced referees! Here's an example to show you how it works: First I turn to the Encounter Matrix. Here I choose the type of area in which my encounter is to occur. Let's live dangerously and choose a back street in the shabby side of town, and see who we can bump into on a dark night. A roll of the percentile dice tells me that the encounter is with a gang of slavers. Rolling again on the appropriate table, I find that they are looking for an escaped slave, and a further roll shows that they think I am the escapee!

The various tables include all the diverse character types (magicians, priests, warriors etc) that one would expect to find in a fantasy city, and also the kind of scene your characters will observe (fire, public execution, drunks fighting), or the bizarre things which might befall them (chamber pot emptied onto character, finding an item, losing an item).

The next section goes on to give more tables to help referees create and populate villages, towns and cities in a

fair amount of detail. But I found the final part of the book the most interesting. It provides material to enable you to learn what a player character was doing between game sessions – this could also be useful on those occasions where a regular player has had to miss a session or two. The writers claim that these tables amount to a solo game, which is perhaps claiming a bit too much, but it's certainly a fun way to kill some time. Unhappily, more than time is apt to be killed, as many of the outcomes are potentially fatal. How would *you* feel if you turned up for a game only to be told that your character had since died? Or got married? Or become bankrupt?

Frankly, my initial interest in the ideas behind this book faded very rapidly. A *good* referee won't need this material. A *bad* referee will certainly abuse it. If you do feel tempted to buy, insist on having a look between the covers for yourself – that should help you to make your own mind up quite quickly.

John Scott

## HARNMASTER

DESIGNED BY  
N. ROBIN CROSSBY

PUBLISHED BY  
COLUMBIA GAMES

PRICE £11.95

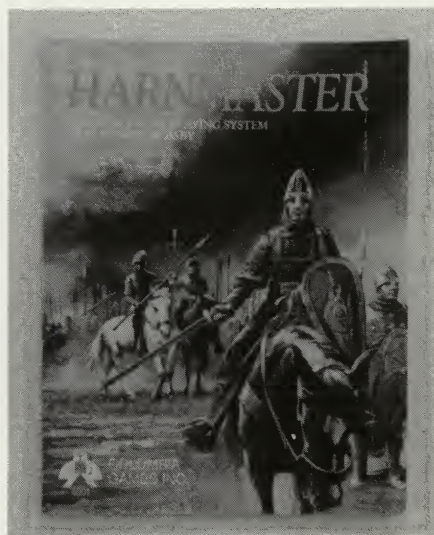
\*\*\*<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

Over the last few years, Columbia Games have produced a lovingly detailed world called Harn. This traditional fantasy world is now covered by over two dozen publications from the small *Encyclopedia Harnica* booklets, to the boxed sets like *Harn* itself. To complement these products Columbia brought out their own rolegame, set in, but not only usable with, their own little universe. *Harnmaster*, for all its pedigree, seems to have largely been ignored by the specialist press. Few reviews of any of the Harn products have appeared, and the multi-system scenarios are never quite multi enough

to include it amongst them. Why is this? At twelve quid for a 144 page softback it isn't cheap, but it is imported and the quality is high. Maybe you need all the other bits of Harn to play it? Well, the blurb on the back says that '... (it) can be used in most fantasy environments.' I think the real answer is that it just hasn't had the hype.

The cover sets the tone; a nicely rendered picture of some pseudo-Norman troops. No orcs being chopped up. No summonings of Dark Lords. Taste? In a role playing game? Whatever next?

There aren't any obvious gaping holes where the 'expansion kit' belongs, as there might be with some other manufacturers I could mention. All of the information, such as religion, which directly relates to Harn has been reproduced here in abbreviated form. The rules tell you how to gain piety points and how to spend them calling upon your God. They also deal with invocations (divine spells) and briefly with the church as a career. If you want to use the rules in Harn then there are notes on the relevant Gods. If you wish to use some other background then it would not be difficult to insert your own



deities, removing or borrowing from the ones presented as you wish. (As a side note, one advantage of using the Harn system with the world is that you can buy ready-made detail in most areas, in the case of religion: *Gods of Harn*).

What do you get for your money? *Harnmaster* is a thick, perfect-bound softback with two full colour pullout reference sheets (both for combat). There are few, but excellent, interior illustrations and lots and lots of tables. It appears rather more tasteful and



mature than we are perhaps used to. I took this as a good sign.

The interior is split into 13 'articles' of varying sizes. Columbia suggest that you dismantle the book and punch holes in the pages for insertion into a file. The advantage of following this course is that you can arrange them in any order you wish and that you can insert pages from other Columbia Games products in the middle, such as **Gods of Harn** in the section about religion. The disadvantage is that it would be very easy to shred your rulebook. Mine remains intact.

Apart from the usual 'What is a rolegame' sort of thing **Harnmaster** falls into five lumps: how to create characters, how to inflict them on the world (skills), how to inflict them on each other (combat and magic), how the world works, and how to inflict the world on the characters.

Creating a character follows the pattern of other rolegames, rolling attributes, determining background, skills, equipment, and so on. The system is different mainly in specifics such as which shape of dice are rolled.

The skill system is based on a percentage scale with criticals and fumbles. Most gamers will recognise familiar elements.

Magic is rather unexciting as it's pretty much the same system that has been trotted out by various manufacturers for years. See Chris Hunt's article in GI #1 for a more in-depth complaint about this state of affairs.

Happily the mechanics for combat are more interesting. Complex in total, the **Harnmaster** combat system is one of the more realistic on the market. It's difficult only if you use all of the options possible at one time. If two characters have a stand-up fight with sword and shield then the rules are easy to use. If there are a dozen different combatants all doing silly things such as grappling horses, berserking, and throwing tables (and all in the dark) most systems would collapse and leave it to the referee to make it all up. It is a credit to Mr Crossby that the rules both allow this sort of complexity and remain intelligible.

The remainder of the book is taken up with the business of describing the

creatures of Harn (mostly stock fantasy), the bookkeeping which the referee is supposed to do behind the scenes, and the fabulous treasures which the player characters may find as their reward.

**Harnmaster** is not a particularly innovative game, relying in general on tried and trusted ideas. Despite this, the clarity of writing and layout together with the sheer volume of ready made background and support material must make it an attractive alternative for those who like a wealth of detail but haven't got the time themselves.

## PILOT'S ALMANAC

DESIGNED BY  
N ROBIN CROSSBY &  
TOM DALGLIESH

PUBLISHED BY  
COLUMBIA GAMES

PRICE £11.95

\*\*\*\*\*<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

Usually, the products that I hear about are a disappointment when I eventually see them; not so the **Pilot's Almanac**. I expected an impressive package and that is what Columbia have produced.

Messing about in boats has long been one of my favourite bits of gaming and it is pleasing to see someone finally cover the topic with the care it deserves.

The **Pilot's Almanac** was written as supplemental rules and info for the **Harnmaster** rolegame. However, as it deals with a separate area of game mechanics, most of the rules for ship movement, navigation, weather, and the like can be nicked for your favourite game with no alterations at all.

As well as the excellent coverage of piloting a craft across the world's oceans there are plenty of other treats in store for the reader. Beginning at the beginning, there are rules for designing and building your own vessels. Hiring a crew, and finding a cargo come next before you place your expensive toy in

the capable hands of a pilot who, with luck and the blessing of good wind, guides it through the seaborne hazards safely to a destination where more financial hazards wait. Maritime trading is an important but nervewracking business.

To make full use of this product you need to understand the **Harnmaster** skill system. If you do, then buy it.

## CASTLES OF HARN

DESIGNED BY  
EDWIN KING & RICHARD  
PORTER

PUBLISHED BY  
COLUMBIA GAMES

PRICE £10.45

\*\*

The title says it all. A book containing the history, economics, and religious situation of eight castles from all over Harn. Each is detailed on a set of floorplans as well as being illustrated with a full colour map of the surrounding settlement. What this leaves you with is a group of potential settings for adventures any of which could easily be expanded into an important part of your game world.

Unfortunately, I found the book disappointing. Instead of something about the science of fortifications in Harn such as the differences between Khuzdul (Dwarven) and Sindarin (Elven) constructions, we are given a sort of tourist's guidebook for each of eight samples. All of the castles picked are fairly commonplace types of building and as the fantasy elements in the background have largely been ignored, I would suggest spending the money instead on one of the excellent texts on real mediaeval fortifications. The only people that I can recommend this to are confirmed Harn addicts who probably have it already.

*Reviews of all Harn products by Jake Thornton*



## THE STAFF OF FANON

DESIGNED BY  
N ROBIN CROSSBY

PUBLISHED BY  
COLUMBIA GAMES

PRICE £6.95

\*\*\*

**The Staff of Fanon** is the first of a trilogy of modules. Each is designed to work on its own although the whole set should be greater than the sum of its parts. The module is written for **Harnmaster** which is convenient if you play it and not too much of a problem if you don't. Few

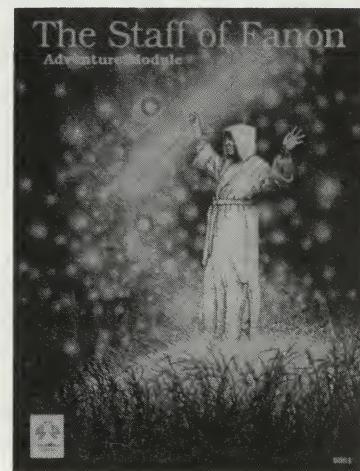
stats are given, most of the module being taken up with text descriptions of people and places rather than lists of numbers. This together with the nature of the adventure makes conversion to other systems relatively painless.

The style of the adventure is 'High Fantasy' with the emphasis being on interaction between the player characters and the non-player characters, something that you don't see too often. Fights do occur, but parties relying on the 'hack and slay' approach will miss out on the best bits of the package.

**The Staff of Fanon** is a well-written, uncomplicated adventure of a traditional, almost old-fashioned style, which will fit into most existing campaigns. It is not outstanding in originality or innovative in content. It is competently written and attractively presented.

Whether you buy it or not depends on what you are looking for. If you are after a simple adventure which contains commendable internal logic, then here you are. Those who seek more exotic fare had best look elsewhere.

*Jake Thornton*



## REALM OF CHAOS

### SLAVES OF DARKNESS

DESIGNED BY  
BRYAN ANSELL, MIKE  
BRUNTON & SIMON  
FORREST

PUBLISHED BY  
GAMES WORKSHOP

PRICE £14.99

\*\*\*

This is a sourcebook for use with the **Warhammer** series of games: **Fantasy Battle**, **Warhammer 40K** (SF tabletop battles) and **Warhammer Fantasy Role-Play**. It is a huge book, containing even more pages than TSR's **Dungeon Master's Guide**. Nearly every page features a piece of artwork, ranging from above average for the rolegame market to superb for any publication, a quality unsurpassed in any rolegame product I have seen.

The vast majority of the book is of use primarily to players of **Warhammer**

**Fantasy Battle**. Apart from one page devoted to player and non-player champions of chaos, **WFRP** is only mentioned in footnotes, or as corollaries to the main rules.

The book is concerned with two gods of chaos: Khorne, the blood god, and Slaanesh, the lord of pleasure. There are promises of details of a further two chaos gods in the companion volume **The Lost and the Damned**. The religions appear to be hastily thrown together and have little credibility as 'real' systems of belief. For example, Slaanesh, the lord of pleasure '... is not a god of warriors.' Why, then, does the tome concern itself with giving us details of the daemons, servants, animals and even steeds of Slaanesh, all of whom have abilities around the same level as veteran player characters? And why are there so few alternatives to combat for his followers? Intricate details are given on how to create champions of chaos for each of the deities; the Rewards of the Gods tables are highly reminiscent of **RuneQuest's** Gifts and Geases. If all this is too much trouble for you there are instant chaos spawn tables included.

The magic chapter seems a little weak as servants of the blood god disdain the use of spells, so only one set of chaos sorcerers can be detailed. Over fifteen pages of magic weapons more than make up for this, however.

We are also provided with a personal Chaos Attribute table, a glorious expansion of **RQ's** chaotic feature idea now featuring silly voice or walk, flatulence, and the intriguing acid excretion. The obligatory army lists are present, along with rules for 'ritual battles' between chaos gods limiting their forces and powers.

The final 80 pages deal with **Warhammer 40K**. This section seems tacked on to the rest of the book, with rules fudged from the preceding pages to attempt to form a coherent mythos across the different games: Chaos Renegades being a bad rehash of the Chaos Champion rules.

The work features two running narratives: the story told by an old man to the occupants of a tavern is well constructed and illustrated. The other, extracts from the *Lieber Malefic* by Marius Hollseher, is well illustrated but has no plot or explanation and comes over as quickly written hack fantasy.

All in all the book will be useful if you are a player of a campaign level game of **Warhammer Fantasy Battle**, of moderate interest if you play **Warhammer 40K**, but only a completist **WFRP** player would need to purchase it. If you like this sort of thing, you will love this product. If not...

*Paz Newis*



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# REBOUND



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## Vital statistics

Regarding the comments concerning *Snakepipe Hollow* and *Troll Realms*. Much of the material was updated to suit the new edition of *RuneQuest* published by Avalon Hill. The text and scenarios are basically intact as they first appeared but we had to do considerable work for the new statistics. Note the final paragraph of the review of *Snakepipe Hollow* which states this fact. *RuneQuest* is as complex as any wargame in terms of numbers and statistics, so updating and rebalancing each and every one is not a negligible job. Please note that, contrary to the reviewer's statement, the statistics were modified significantly as well as updated. Many changes have been made. If the reviewer had bothered to look at his old copy of the book, he would have noticed how much more challenging the lower levels of the scenario are. Even considering the task in terms of sheer bulk, the statistics are significant: out of the total 68 pages,

including main book and insert, roughly 25-26 pages are statistics (37% of the book).

Furthermore, some entirely new textual material that significantly changes the scenario was also included but carelessly overlooked by the reviewer (see pp 25, 26, 36, 37). It is a mistake to describe this product as an exact uplift, although the point may not be totally obvious. Finally, we included a significant amount of new artwork, as shown by the aforementioned paragraph, including seven new pictures and five new maps, none previously published.

Again, for *Troll Realms* over a third of the product is made up of statistics, all of which are newly done according to the new version of the game. This is a lot of hard work and creativity expended to make it a new and exciting game.

To have said that these items were 'exact uplifts' is giving them short shrift.

I would think that to be objective, you would be honour bound to give us right of rebuttal and print the above.

**Greg Stafford**  
Chaosium, Inc  
Oakland, USA

## Keyed up

It seems to me that the success of *Trivial Pursuit* has had a remarkable effect on games prices. I know the profit margins are still pretty low on games with a high component count but anything over twenty quid is more than my brain can handle. The price I was quoted for *Die Macher* nearly gave me a heart attack. Perhaps I should also point out that I consider train fares, petrol, books, computer software, similarly overpriced. I happen to think your magazine is underpriced, by the way (*You won't any more - Ed*).

On a different topic; I have had a letter from Steve Nicholls (BSc), the editor of *Games Monthly*, which suggests my review of his magazine was 'libellous'. He goes on to refer to the 'appalling *Games Review*', and then suggests that GI 'exists to inflate the ego of Brian Walker'.

**Andy Key**  
Kingshill, Swindon SN1 5LE

*I'm a scorpio; what does he expect?*

## Russian Salad

I'd like to quibble with your judgement on the Revolution variant for Kremlin. I think you're guilty of the same type of 'knee-jerk reaction' that you confessed to in your initial review of my changes to Kremlin.

Revolution does work. It is not the same type of game mind you, but it is entertaining and great fun nonetheless as there is a lot more bloodshed in Stalin's era. True, illness doesn't play much of a role but there are lots of heads being lopped off nonetheless. Many of our playtesters preferred it to the actual game so saying that it doesn't work is a tad harsh. This wasn't one of those judgements you made without playing it, was it? I'm not saying it is a better game than the original, just different . . . and you need to play it with all the advanced rules including the



Intrigue cards. I hope you don't close the book on this one yet . . . I'd like to see you eat some more words.

**Donald J Greenwood**  
The Avalon Hill Game Company  
Baltimore, USA

*Quite honestly, I've lost my appetite. However, if I do as you say, I won't be dining alone. Everyone I know who has played this variant agrees that the new politicians are too young. Try my suggestion of adding thirty years. You could end up feasting yourself.*

### Howzat?

Many congratulations on your first issue of *Games International*.

In February we will be releasing a new publication entitled *Sports Gamer*, and I can't resist the idea of reviewing *Armchair Cricket*. Of all the sports, Americans just can't fathom cricket. 'You play it for how many days?' Do you have an address on *Armchair Adventurers*? If so, I would greatly appreciate it.

**Wallace Poulter**  
3W Sports Games, Inc  
Cambria, USA

*Armchair Adventurers are at 78 High St, Brandon, Suffolk IP27 0AU, UK.*

### The Kingmaker

Thank you for the copy of your magazine. I can honestly say that I have never enjoyed a games magazine so much (except for those US magazines

## WANTED: WRITERS & DESIGNERS

Reckon you've got what it takes to write for GI? We're looking for general features for the magazine. We're particularly interested in variants on existing games. Send your finely crafted works of genius to: Games International Submissions, Lamerton House, 23a High Street, Ealing, London W5 5DF.

when they said something nice about *Kingmaker*), and I speak as someone who has a complete collection of *Games & Puzzles*.

To anybody wondering about my follow-up to *Kingmaker*, I can tell you that I am about halfway through the development of another game. The delay was due to the uncertainties of working as a freelance in television. My new job will hopefully provide a better background to enable me to finish the game.

**Andrew McNeil**  
London NW6

### Year of the dragon

Richard Ashley's review of *DragonLance* (issue #2) roused my interest. Coincidentally I've invented a game called 'Dragon Riders'. Unlike *DragonLance*, 'Dragon Riders' is a straightforward aerial combat game in which opposing dragons physically move in three dimensions. The rules are kept reasonably simple and both children and adults have enjoyed it.

Strangely enough not a single British manufacturer has accepted it. I'm puzzled as to why companies can release games rating only one or two

stars in your magazine but seem so reluctant to accept a game that rouses enthusiasm.

**Geoff Wright**  
London SW16

*DragonLance has a considerable sales advantage: it ties in with a popular series of fantasy novels. Perhaps you would be better off submitting your game to American manufacturers. They tend to be more receptive to fantasy games*

### On campaign

Could you please mention the following event in your splendid magazine:

CAMPAIGN '89. Milton Keynes Wargames Society will be holding their annual event on May 6th and 7th at Woughton Leisure Centre, Milton Keynes. This year's event will include not only the southern playoffs of the Osprey World Championships, but also a new event, the UK Fantasy/Science Fiction Championships. For entry details, or further details on the event itself, please contact me:

**Dean H Bass**  
CAMPAIGN Organiser  
14 Skeats Wharf  
Milton Keynes MK15 8AY

## FREE CLASSIFIED SECTION SMALL ADS

**WANTED DESPERATELY** - any issues of *Games & Puzzles*; *Gamer*, *Games Gazette*. Best prices paid by collector. Tel Trevor James 0904 704595 after 7pm.

**BOARDGAMERS.** Try playing games by post. Over 1,000 people already find it an enjoyable hobby. Dozens of games, magazines, hobby meets, weekend get-togethers. Send £2 for 100 page introductory package to John Dodds, 55 Leigham Vale, London SW16 2JQ.

**HELP** Games International is looking for both translations and translators to contribute to our translation bank. This is going to be a service for our readers so we regret we cannot offer

payment, though we will give free subscriptions. At present we need translations from German of Ben Hur (Fagus), Timber (Jean Poel), Lieber Bairisch Sternen (Moskito), Iridium (Edition Perluhn), Galopper Gluckswette (SBV), Wabanti (Kosmos), and from French: Triple Couronne (publisher unknown). Readers requiring copies of existing translations should enclose £1 to cover costs.

**GI IS LOOKING** for copies of *Railroader* (waddingtons) and *Railway Pioneers* (Longmans). Tel (01)567 7740.

**SEARCHING** for Game of Ancient Kingdoms (Hartland). Contact Ernst Knauth,

Nachsommerweg 35, 7000 Stuttgart 40, West Germany.

**GERMAN COLLECTOR** is looking for all kinds of boardgames, especially from 3M, Gamut of Games etc. Also interested in very old games. Manfred Gaus, Lavesstraße 19, 3000 Hannover 1, West Germany.

**SPIELBOX**, Germany's premier gaming magazine. Available from Huss-Verlag GmbH, Joseph-Dollinger-Bogen 5, 8000 München 40. Tel (089)32391 441.

[CLASSIFIED ADS CONTINUE ON THE NEXT PAGE]



# FREE CLASSIFIED SECTION

## SMALL ADS (continued)

**WANTED.** Players or groups in Eastbourne/Hampton Park. Contact David, 10 Commercial Road, Eastbourne, W Sussex BN21 3XE.

**SKYREALMS OF JORUNE:** Calling all you chatty Sholaris and players out there. Want to swap ideas, essays, scenarios, campaign write-ups etc? You do? Call me on Woking 26926 or write to David Castle, April Cottage, Prey Heath Close, Mayford, Woking, Surrey GU22 0SP.

**PRIZE PROPERTY.** Has anybody out there got the rules of this 1970s MB game? If so, I should be delighted to hear from you. Denis Arnold, 19 Sunray Ave, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 9QG (0394 274145).

**PLAYERS WANTED** for Cthulhu, SkyRealms of Jorune and any other decent RPG, West London area. Contact Darren Hanwell, (01) 567 7631.

## GAMES CLUBS

**BLACKROD** Wargames Society have regular fortnightly meetings. All types of games are played including historical figure wargames, fantasy role-playing games and all types of board games. New members are welcome with or without any previous experience. For further details contact: Trains & Things, 170/172, Chorley New Road, Horwich, Nr Bolton, Lancs. Tel (0204) 669203 or 691895.

**EVERSHAM** Role-play association. Established four years. Every fortnight, any games played. Contact Paul, (0386) 48202.

**GAMES MEETING** every Tuesday at the Bun Shop Pub, Berrylands Rd. Surbiton. 7pm till closing time. Wide variety of board games and role-playing games.

**GLC (R.I.P.)** Wargames Club meets alternate Wednesdays and Thursdays (Feb 2, 8, 16, 22, Mar 1) in room 88, County Hall, on the South Bank, SE1 (nearest tubes Embankment and Waterloo). 6.30 till 10.00pm. Miniatures, two player board wargames, Warhammer, Pax Britannica, 1830, etc.. Contact: Les (01) 330 0239

**NEW MALDEN & SURBITON** games group meets every other Monday at the Railway Hotel Pub, Coombe Road, New Malden, 7pm till closing time. Miniature figure wargames include Vietnam, Warhammer 40K and others. Board gamers and role-players welcome. Contact: Peter (01) 942 5624.

**NOTTINGHAM AND DERBY** Games Club meets every Thursday at the Queens Walk Community Centre, The Meadows, Nottingham. 7-10.30pm. Contact: Mick Haytack (0332) 511898.

**SIGMA GAMES CLUB** meets every 2nd, 4th, and 5th (if applicable) Sunday of the month at the Intervarsity Club, Bedford Chambers, King St. Covent Garden, London. 3-10.30pm. Games played include Empire Builder, Talisman, Titan, 1830, and many more.

## GERMANY

**SPIELRATZN** at the Gross Wirt pub every other Friday. Winthstr. Munich 19, Germany. For further details contact: Bernd Brunnhofer (089) 264150.

**FANTASY WORLD** Role Playing Club in Munich. For more info contact: Detlov Motz, Vorholzerstr. 4, 8000 Munich 71. Tel. (089) 795244.

## USA

**EAST VALLEY** Advanced Squad Leader Club. Contact: Pierce Ostrander, 5046 E. Decatur St. Mesa, AZ. 85205. Tel. (602) 985 4505.

**HEXAGON SOCIETY** meets every first and third Saturday From 10am to 6pm. Contact: James McCormack, 1450 Harmon Ave. 224c Las Vegas, NV 89119. Tel. (702) 794 3523 (evenings)

**MIAMI GAMING CLUB** seeks new members. All types of games played. Meetings are once a week from 7pm to 11pm. Thurs. or Fri. at 7200 S.W. 7th St. Miami. Contact: Rex on 264 9752, or Steve on 271 5418. **NEW ORLEANS GAMES CLUB** seeks players for all kinds of games. Contact: Greg Schloesser, 3800 Briant Drive, Marrero, LA 70072. Tel. (504) 347 7145.

**NORTH SHORE GAMES CLUB** meets approximately once a month somewhere in Massachusetts. Tournaments, food, and even a newsletter. For more details of this, and other East Coast games clubs, contact Alan Moon, 11 Broadway, Apt.1, Beverly, MA. 01918. Tel. (508) 922-7488.

**PENN-JERSEY GAMERS** meet monthly and play most games, but no role playing. Newsletter, tournaments, raffles. Contact: Jim Vroom, 2290 Galloway Rd., A-23, Bensalem, PA 19020.

**SANTA FE SPRINGS GAMERS ASSOC.** looking for new members to play boardgames and Role-Playing games. Tues/Thurs 5-9pm. Saturdays 9am-5pm. at the Town Centre Hall, 11740 E. Telegraph Rd. Santa Fe Springs, CA. Tel. (213) 863 4896 (club hours only).

**SCHENECTADY WARGAMERS ASSOCIATION** have regular meetings and hold weekend conventions featuring tournaments based on Axis & Allies, Empire Builder, and Machiavelli. Role playing too. Contact: Eric Paperman, 418 Vliet Blvd. Cohoes, NY 12047. Tel. (581) 237 5874.

**WASHINGTON GAMERS ASSOC.** meets monthly, and publishes a bimonthly newsletter (\$5 for six issues). Contact: Dennis Wang, 2200 Huntington Ave. Alexandria, VA. 22303. Tel. (703) 960 1259

**WINDY CITY WARGAMERS** meet twice a month. Miniatures and board wargames, plus newsletter. Louie Tokarz, 5724 W. 106th St., Chicago Ridge, IL. 60415. Tel. (312) 857 7060.

## CONVENTION DIARY

### UK

**EXETER UNIVERSITY GAMES CONVENTION**, 11th and 12th March 1989 at Cornwall House, Exeter University. Competitions, stalls, demonstrations, talks. £2 on the door or £1.50 in advance (with SAE) to Miss M Hemes, Cornwall House, St German's Road, Exeter, Devon.

**GAMESFAIR**, 7th-9th April 1989 at Reading University. Large residential rolegame convention featuring the AD&D Open Tournament. Sells out fast so try phoning (0223) 212517 to see whether there are any tickets available.

**BABBACON**, 14th-16th April 1989. General boardgames convention in a beautiful setting on the riviera anglais, including amongst other attractions a Britannia tournament. Contact Rob Chapman, 7 Baymount, Paignton, Devon TQ3 2LD.

**CAMPAIGN '89**, 6th - 7th May 1989 at Woughton Leisure Centre, Milton Keynes. Wargames convention with demonstration and participation games plus trade stands. Contact Dean Bass, 14 Skeats Wharf, Pennyland, Milton Keynes MK15 8AY.

**GAMES DAY**, 27th May 1989 at the Assembly Rooms, Derby. Redesigned Games Workshop event. Includes the Golden Demon Awards and other Games Workshop related events. £2.50 on the door or £2 in advance.

**DIPLOMACY PLAYERS.** Can you match the best? Ninth Annual British Diplomacy Championships, 4-5 November 1989. £100 first prize. Limited entry so register now. For details: SAE to Brian Williams, 30 Rydding Lane, West Bromwich B71 2HA.

**CONJUNCTION.** 27th-29th July 1990 at New Hall College, Cambridge. Relaxed rolegame convention organised like an SF con rather than a selling exercise. Probably similar to the late, lamented KoanCon. Contact: Conjunction, c/o Wycliffe Road, Cambridge CB1 3JD.

## EUROPE

**SPIEL '89**, the Essen Games Fair with expanded Interteam tournament, at the Gruganhalle, Essen from the 17th-22nd October 1989.

## NORTH AMERICA

**ORCCON 12**, the western regional game convention: February 10th-13th 1989 at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel. Strategy, family and adventure: board, role-playing, miniature & computer games played. Call (213) 420 3675 for more information.

**ORIGINS**, the national strategy and adventure gaming convention and exposition: June 28th to July 2nd, 1989 at the Los Angeles Airport Hilton Hotel. Call (213) 420 3675 for more information or write to LA Origins '89, 5374 Village Road, Long Beach, CA 90808.



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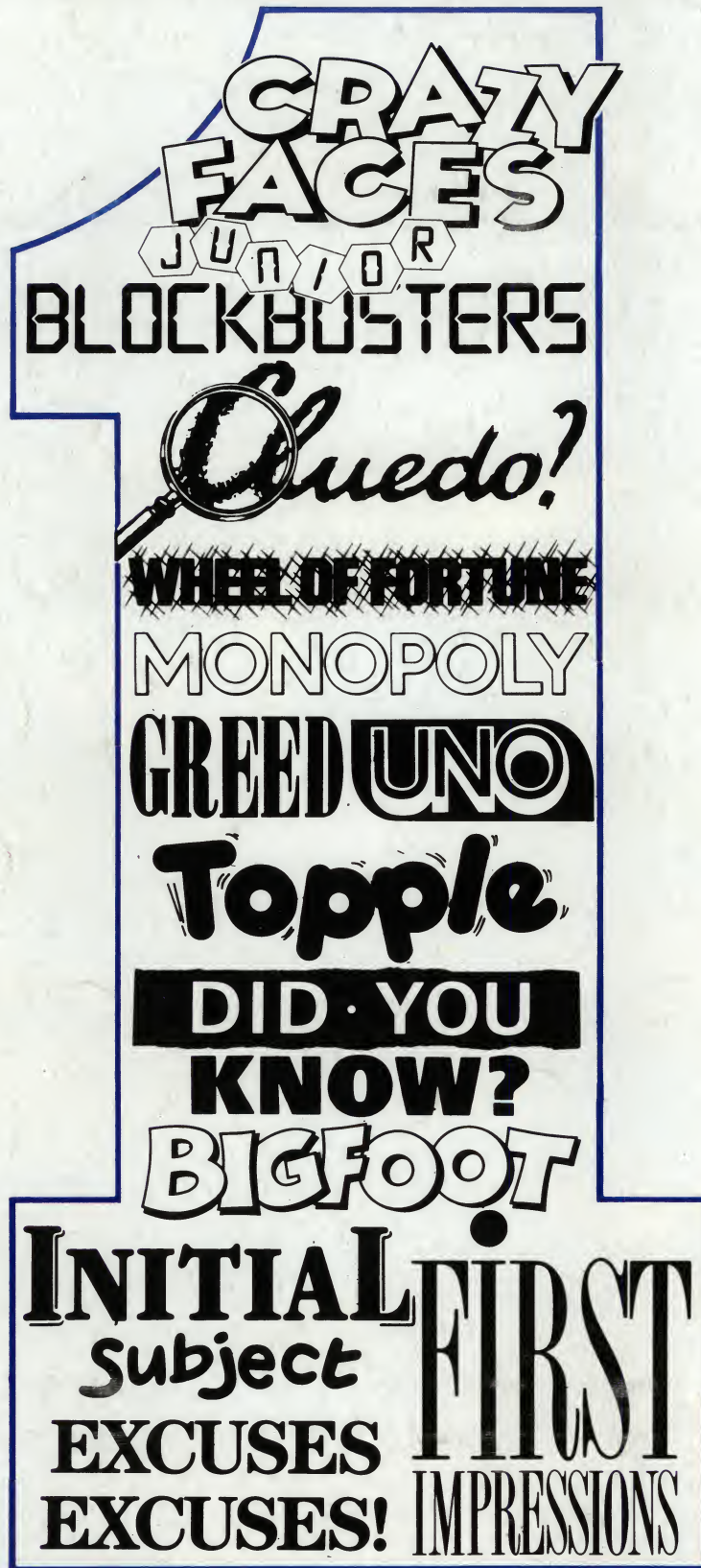
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